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SCO heads condemn Pahalgam terrorist attack

Declaration signed and adopted by all members; it called for an end to the 'cross-border movement' of terrorists | They expressed their opposition to 'unilateral coercive measures, including those of an economic nature' | India joined nations in the grouping to condemn the strikes by Israel and the U.S. against Iran, a member state, in June

Vighnesh P. Venkitesh
TIANJIN

The 10-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on Monday "strongly condemned" terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the Pahalgam attack and the attacks on Jaffer Express and Khuzdar in Pakistan.

The Tianjin Declaration, signed and adopted by all members, including India, Pakistan, and Russia, called for an end to "cross-border movement" of terrorists. The declaration reaffirmed the bloc's "firm commitment to fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism", and stressed the inadmissibility of attempts to use terrorist, separatist, and extremist groups for "mercenary purposes".

The member states also opposed "unilateral coercive measures, including those of an economic nature", that contravene the United Nations charter and principles of the World Trade Organization, in a possible reference to the

U.S. tariffs.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who chaired the meeting of the heads of the member states, in his opening remarks, criticised the "bullying behaviour" in the world order and called upon leaders to "adhere to fairness and justice" while opposing "cold war mentality".

"The shadows of Cold War mentality, bullying, are not dissipating, and there are new challenges that are increasing, not diminishing," said Mr. Xi, who has often used the term "cold war mentality" to refer to the uncertainties over the U.S. tariffs.

'SCO plus' meeting

The declaration at the summit, which focused on strengthening the Global South amid global uncertainties in trade and a "fluid and chaotic global situation", opened by stating that the world was undergoing "profound historical changes that affect all spheres of political, socio-economic, and social relations".

Mr. Xi, who chaired the

Oppose terrorism: PM at SCO summit

TIANJIN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked whether "open support" of terrorism by some countries was acceptable, as he spoke at the summit meet of the heads of state of the SCO on Monday. Addressing the meeting chaired by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Mr. Modi said the 'S' in SCO should also stand for security, and mentioned the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians. "We must jointly oppose terrorism in all its forms and colours. This is our duty towards humanity," he said. » PAGE 5

'SCO plus' meeting on Monday afternoon, proposed a Global Governance Initiative (GGI), calling on countries to work in concert for a more just and equitable global governance system adhering to sovereign equality, abiding by international rule of law, practicing multilateralism, advocating the people-centered approach,



Power point: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tianjin on Monday. ANI

and focusing on taking real actions.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, briefing the press on Monday night, said the SCO encourages all countries to utilise UN mechanisms and multilateral ideals and that global governance should not be attained by unilateral bullying. He also said that Pakistan and Armenia had announced de-

velopment of diplomatic relationship at the summit.

Announcing that the grouping has decided to merge the statuses given to non-member countries - dialogue partner and observer - to a single partner status, Mr. Wang said that Laos has been accepted as a partner country of the SCO, taking the total strength of the grouping to

27 with 10 members and 17 partners.

Secretary-General of the SCO, Nurlan Yermekbayev, said at the briefing that an agreement was made at the summit to establish an SCO development bank, a long-term ambition of Beijing.

Taking note of Israel's ongoing war on Gaza and the catastrophic humani-

Modi touts peace as he meets Putin

TIANJIN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday and stressed the need for a ceasefire in Ukraine. Russian state media reported that the leaders spoke for almost an hour in the vehicle before sitting down for the meeting. "Had an excellent meeting with President Putin... Discussed ways to deepen bilateral cooperation in all sectors," he said in a social media post, adding that the leaders "exchanged views on regional and global developments". » PAGE 5

tarian situation engulfing the Gaza Strip, all the member states expressed "deep concern" and strongly condemned "actions that have led to numerous casualties among the civilian population" in the enclave. India also joined the fellow members of the grouping to strongly condemn the strikes by Israel and the

U.S. against Iran, a member state, in June that targeted Tehran's nuclear facilities.

The declaration also took note of the political situation in Afghanistan. The members reiterated that the formation of an "inclusive government with broad participation of representatives of all ethno-political groups" of the society is the only way to achieve lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. All the member states, except India, also reaffirmed their support for China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Mr. Xi, in his opening remarks, pledged to provide \$2 billion in grants to member countries within this year, and an additional \$10 billion in loan to member banks of the SCO Interbank Consortium over the next three years. He also said that the group should set up an "SCO development bank" as soon as possible.

(The writer is in China at an invitation from the China Public Diplomacy Association.)

(With inputs from Suhani Haider)

SCO heads condemn Pahalgam terrorist attack

The Hindu – Page 1

GS2 (International Relations)

Context

The article reports on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit held in Tianjin, where member states condemned terrorism, including the Pahalgam attack in India. The summit produced the Tianjin Declaration, focusing on terrorism, regional stability, opposition to unilateral sanctions, and cooperation in governance and development.

About SCO

Full Form: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Establishment: 2001 (evolved from Shanghai Five, 1996)

Headquarters: Beijing, China

Type: Eurasian political, economic, and security grouping



Objectives of SCO

Promote regional peace, security, and stability.

Combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism.

Encourage economic cooperation and connectivity.

Strengthen multilateralism and fair global governance.

Foster cultural and humanitarian exchanges.



India's Interest in SCO

Counter-Terrorism: Platform to highlight cross-border terrorism and press Pakistan.

Strategic Presence: Offers India access to Central Asia, a region important for energy and connectivity.

Energy Security: Engages with energy-rich states like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia.

Connectivity: Links to Chabahar Port and the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Balancing China & Pakistan: Acts as a counterweight in a grouping dominated by China.

Geopolitical Voice: Opportunity to align with Eurasian powers while keeping an independent stance.

Summary of the Article

At the SCO summit in Tianjin, member states strongly condemned terrorism, specifically mentioning the Pahalgam attack and other attacks in Pakistan.

They adopted the Tianjin Declaration, calling for an end to cross-border movement of terrorists.

The declaration opposed unilateral coercive measures (such as U.S. sanctions) and emphasized fairness and justice in global governance.

Leaders expressed concern over Afghanistan's stability, stressing the need for an inclusive government representing all groups.

Most members (except India) reaffirmed support for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The SCO also discussed global economic reforms, equitable governance, and strengthening cooperation.

PM Modi stressed opposition to terrorism in "all its forms and manifestations" and highlighted open support of terrorism by some countries.

On the sidelines, Modi met Putin, calling for peace in Ukraine and discussing bilateral cooperation.



Larger Bench to rule if minority-run schools are exempted from RTE Act

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday referred to a larger Bench the question of whether minority educational institutions are entirely exempt from the purview of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009.

A two-judge Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan made the reference in a judgment based on a batch of civil appeals questioning school education departments' insistence on faculty clearing the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) in minority institutions.

The reference stems from apprehensions over a Constitution Bench verdict of 2014 in *Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust* case. In the case, a five-



Minority status seems to have become a vehicle for circumventing the mandate of the RTE Act and tool to achieve autonomous status

DIPANKAR DATTA
SUPREME COURT JUDGE

judge Bench was testing the constitutionality of Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act. The provision mandates educational institutions to provide 25% reservation for children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections at the entry level in order to foster social inclusion in elementary education.

However, the 2014 judgment concluded that Section 12(1)(c) violated the mi-

nority character of these institutions and impacted their institutional autonomy. The Constitution Bench went on to take minority institutions entirely out of the ambit of the RTE law. Justice Datta, writing for the Bench, observed that the *Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust* judgment has "unknowingly jeopardised the very foundation of universal elementary education".

"Exemption of minority institutions from the RTE Act leads to fragmentation of the common schooling vision and weakening of the idea of inclusivity and universality envisioned by Article 21A. We are afraid, instead of uniting children across caste, class, creed, and community, it reinforces 'divides' and 'dilutes' the transformative potential of shared learning spaces," Justice Datta pointed out.

The judge wrote that the 2014 judgment has led to misuse. "Minority status seems to have become a vehicle for circumventing the mandate of the RTE Act. In our humble opinion, it has opened up a situation whereby multiple institutions have sought to acquire minority status to become autonomous," Justice Datta observed.

Larger Bench to rule if minority-run schools are exempted from RTE Act

The Hindu – Page 6

CS2 (Polity & Governance)

Context

The Supreme Court has referred to a larger Bench the issue of whether minority educational institutions are fully exempt from the provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. This comes after questions were raised about applying faculty and admission requirements, like the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) and 25% reservation for disadvantaged children, in minority institutions.

Relevant Section of RTE Act, 2009

Section 12(1)(c): Mandates that all private unaided schools must reserve 25% of their seats for children from economically weaker sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups, to ensure social inclusion in elementary education.

In the 2014 *Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust* case, a Constitution Bench had ruled that applying Section 12(1)(c) to minority institutions would violate their right to administer institutions under Article 30 of the Constitution, thereby exempting them from RTE obligations.



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About the RTE Act, 2009

Enacted to operationalize Article 21A (Right to Free and Compulsory Education for children aged 6–14 years).

Key provisions:

- 25% reservation in private unaided schools for disadvantaged groups (Sec 12(1)(c)).
- Minimum infrastructure and teacher qualifications.
- Prohibition of screening tests and capitation fees.
- Norms for pupil–teacher ratio.
- Objective: To achieve universal, inclusive, and equitable elementary education.



Manufacturing PMI rises to 17-year high in August

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Activity in the manufacturing sector in August 2025 expanded at the fastest rate in more than 17 years, propelled by a demand-driven rise in new orders and production, according

to a private sector survey.

The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) climbed to 59.3 in August from 59.1 in July, indicating the "fastest improvement in operating conditions for 17-and-a-half years", the report said. The graphs included

in the report show that India's manufacturing PMI was last higher in mid-2008.

"Companies upped the pace at which additional materials were bought, and more jobs were created, partly reflecting positive expectations regarding

the outlook," the report said. The survey report went on to explain that the uptick in the headline PMI figure reflected an acceleration in the growth of production volumes, which grew the quickest in close to five years.

"The increase of U.S. ta-

riff on Indian goods to 50% might have contributed to the slight easing in new export orders growth, as American buyers refrain from placing orders in the midst of tariff uncertainty," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.



Manufacturing PMI rises to 17-year high in August

The Hindu – Page 12

GS3 (Economy)

Context

In August 2025, India's manufacturing activity expanded at the fastest pace in 17 years, driven by rising new orders and increased production.

The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 59.3 in August from 59.1 in July, marking the highest level since mid-2008.

The rise reflected stronger demand, increased hiring, and higher input purchases, although export growth slowed slightly due to global tariff uncertainties.

What is PMI?

An economic indicator derived from monthly surveys of private sector companies.

Compiled by S&P Global (earlier IHS Markit) in India.

Measures business activity and economic health in the manufacturing and services sectors.

Types of PMI

Manufacturing PMI – Tracks manufacturing activity (production, new orders, employment, supplier deliveries, inventories).

Services PMI – Tracks activity in the services sector.

Composite PMI – Weighted average of manufacturing and services PMI.

Scale of PMI

PMI is measured on a 0–100 scale.

Above 50 → Expansion compared to the previous month.

Below 50 → Contraction.

Exactly 50 → No change.



EXPLAINED SCIENCE

WHY EARTHQUAKES OCCUR, WHY AFGHANISTAN IS SO VULNERABLE

AN EARTHQUAKE of 6.0 magnitude struck north-east Afghanistan on Sunday night, killing more than 800 people and injuring at least 2,000. The epicentre was 27 km northeast of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, and its depth was just 8 km.

Afghanistan is particularly vulnerable to earthquakes. In 2023, the country's Herat province experienced three major earthquakes, which killed almost 1,300 people and injured around 1,700. In 2022, a 5.9-magnitude quake killed at least 1,300 people in the country's southeast.



Kunar province in Afghanistan was impacted by Sunday's quake. AP

What causes an earthquake?

An earthquake is an intense shaking of the ground caused by movement under the Earth's surface. It happens when two blocks of the Earth slip past one another, which releases stored 'elastic strain' energy in the form of seismic waves.

The Earth's crust is fragmented into tectonic plates, whose edges, called plate boundaries, constitute faults, or zones of fractures between blocks of rock. The tectonic plates move slowly, sliding past and bumping into one another. An earthquake occurs when a plate has moved far enough and its rough edge, stuck on a fault, ultimately overcomes friction and slips. The point below the Earth's surface where an earthquake starts is called the hypocenter, and the location directly above it on the surface is called epicentre.

Why does a quake's depth matter?

Shallow quakes — of depth up to 70 km — are generally more dangerous as they carry more energy when they emerge to the surface, compared to quakes that occur deeper underneath. Deeper quakes spread farther as seismic waves move radially upwards to the surface, but the waves lose energy while travelling greater distances.

Apart from depth, the magnitude of an earthquake determines how destruc-

tive it could be. Magnitude is how big the seismic waves are, while strength refers to the energy they carry.

Seismic waves produced by a magnitude 6 earthquake have 10 times higher amplitude than the ones produced by a magnitude 5 earthquake. The energy differential is even higher: 32 times for every change of 1 in magnitude.

Why does Afghanistan experience earthquakes frequently?

Afghanistan lies on a number of fault lines where the Indian and Eurasian plates meet. These plates collide often, leading to significant tectonic activity.

Brian Baptie, a seismologist at the British Geological Survey, told *Science Media Centre*, "With India moving towards Eurasia at around 45 mm each year, this collision zone is one of the most seismically active regions on Earth, accounting for around 15% of all seismic energy released around the world each year. This is an area of very high seismic hazard, with regular earthquake activity spreading across complex fault systems..."

The Hindu Kush region has seen 12 quakes of magnitude greater than 7 since 1900, according to Baptie.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

WHY EARTHQUAKES OCCUR, WHY AFGHANISTAN IS SO VULNERABLE

The Indian Express, Page 16

Context

This article explains the science behind earthquakes and highlights Afghanistan's heightened vulnerability, referencing a recent deadly 6.0 magnitude quake that struck north-east Afghanistan, causing large-scale casualties and damage. The piece analyzes both the geological underpinnings and the region's history of seismic disasters.

Article Summary

- Afghanistan was hit by a 6.0 magnitude earthquake with its epicenter near Jalalabad, at a shallow depth of 8 km, resulting in over 800 deaths and 2,000 injuries.
- The country is particularly prone to earthquakes, having experienced multiple deadly events in recent years, especially in Herat and the southeast.
- Earthquakes are caused by the movement of tectonic plates, which release elastic strain energy when they slip past each other along faults.
- Shallow earthquakes, like the recent one, are more dangerous because their energy is transmitted more forcefully to the surface.
- Afghanistan's frequent seismic activity is due to its position atop several fault lines where the Indian and Eurasian plates collide, resulting in significant tectonic shifts and hazards.
- The Hindu Kush region is notably active, having seen 12 earthquakes above magnitude 7 since 1900, making Afghanistan one of earth's most seismically hazardous areas.





IAS Officer's Powerful 20-Minute-A-Day Idea Tackled Absenteeism & Tobacco in 250 Telangana Schools

A routine morning assembly in Telangana's Adilabad now sparks change. Through 'Aarogya Pathshala', IAS officer Rajarshi Shah introduced 20-minute health lessons that fight stress, substance use, and absenteeism. Today, over 250 schools are thriving, attendance has climbed to 70%, and children are carrying lessons of health and hope home.



By **Shivani Gupta**

Edited By **Pranita Bhat** & **Saumya Singh**

📅 August 29, 2025 ⌚ 7 Min Read



'Aarogya Pathshala' transforms morning school assemblies in Adilabad into educational sessions on health.

Mains Enrichment

IAS Officer's Powerful 20-Minute-A-Day Idea Tackled Absenteeism & Tobacco in 250 Telangana Schools

Context

This article discusses the innovative 'Aarogya Pathshala' initiative led by IAS officer Rajarshi Shah in Adilabad, Telangana. By introducing 20-minute morning health lessons during assemblies, the initiative targeted absenteeism, substance use, and stress among students. The program has improved attendance to 70% and has positively impacted over 250 schools, teaching children valuable lessons in health and wellness.

Usage in Mains

- Can be cited as a model for effective school-based health interventions under GS2 (Governance, Social Justice, Education) or GS4 (Ethics—Leadership, Innovation).
- Demonstrates how administrative innovation can address multiple social issues (absenteeism, tobacco use) via participatory, preventive education.
- Useful in questions about best practices in public administration, health promotion, community engagement, and improving learning outcomes.



DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q1. Which of the following features was emphasized in the latest Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit declaration regarding international security?

- A. Advancing unilateral military interventions
- B. Ending the cross-border movement of terrorists
- C. Promoting economic isolationism
- D. Opposing all forms of diplomatic cooperation

Q2. The Supreme Court referred the exemption of minority-run schools from the Right to Education Act, 2009 to a larger Bench to resolve constitutional ambiguities regarding:

- A. Student dress codes
- B. Section 12(1)(c)'s reservation for disadvantaged children
- C. Teacher salary hikes
- D. Compulsory mother tongue instruction

Q3. India's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to a 17-year high in August 2025 primarily because of:

- A. Supply chain disruptions
- B. Demand-driven expansion in new orders and production
- C. Increase in raw material prices
- D. Government subsidy withdrawal

DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q4 Afghanistan's vulnerability to earthquakes is primarily attributed to:

- A. Volcanic activity
- B. Collision between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates
- C. High altitude terrain
- D. Monsoon weather patterns

Q5 According to expert seismologists, which region in Afghanistan has historically seen frequent high-magnitude earthquakes, accounting for a significant share of global seismic energy release?

- A. Panjshir Valley
- B. Hindu Kush Region
- C. Bamyan Province
- D. Farah Province

Answers

- A. Panjshir Valley
- B. Hindu Kush Region
- C. Bamyan Province
- D. Farah Province