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Bishkek Opens: The SCO Turns 25, and Pakistan Takes the Chair Next

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Bishkek Opens: The SCO Turns 25, and Pakistan Takes the Chair Next

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

The 26th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation opened at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on August 31, 2026, and runs to September 1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin are all present. A Modi-Putin bilateral is scheduled on the sidelines; no Modi-Xi bilateral has been formally announced.

The August 29 and August 30 editions carried the preview. This article covers the summit convening. As this edition is written, no Bishkek Declaration exists and no summit outcome has been announced. Everything below is the agenda, the arithmetic and the institutional structure, which are knowable now. The decisions are not.

WHAT IS MEETING, AND WHERE

The summit is hosted by **President Sadyr Japarov** at Bishkek. The Prime Minister arrived on **August 30** and was received at the airport by **Adylbek Kasymaliev**, Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan.

The Bishkek meeting is the second leg of a **four-day, two-nation Central Asia visit** that began with a state visit to **Uzbekistan**.

Leaders reported present or expected include Modi, Xi Jinping, Putin, Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian**, Pakistani Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** and Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan**. TASS reported leaders of **17 countries** and the **UN Secretary-General** attending, a figure that includes observers, dialogue partners and guests, not only the ten members.

THE ORGANISATION, IN THE FORM UPSC TESTS IT

FEATURE	DETAIL
Founded	June 15, 2001, at Shanghai
Predecessor	The Shanghai Five , from 1996
Founding members	China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
Members today	10
India and Pakistan admitted	2017 , at the Astana summit
Iran admitted	2023
Belarus admitted	2024
Secretariat	Beijing
RATS Executive Committee	Tashkent
Official languages	Russian and Chinese
Secretary-General	Nurlan Yermekbayev of Kazakhstan, for 2025 to 2027
RATS Executive Committee Director	Ularbek Sharsheev

The distinction most often got wrong. The **Secretariat at Beijing** is the organisation's standing administrative body. The **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure at Tashkent** is a separate permanent body with its own Executive Committee and its own director. They are not branches of one office, and a question that swaps their cities is a standard trap.

The 25-year marker

The Bishkek summit falls in the organisation's **twenty-fifth year**, counting from the Shanghai founding of June 2001. The anniversary is being used by the host and by member states as a framing device, and it is the kind of round number that shows up in a Prelims stem.

THE AGENDA AS STATED

Member states have put forward **regional security and counter-terrorism, cross-border terrorism, trade and economic cooperation, connectivity, energy security, clean energy and digital cooperation**. The **conflict in West Asia** and the **war in Ukraine** are expected to feature in leaders' discussions. A **Bishkek Declaration** is the customary summit document.

The connectivity project in the room

The **China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway** is the flagship infrastructure item of the Bishkek summit. It runs **more than 500 kilometres**, is costed at about **4.7 billion United States dollars**, and implementation began in **December 2024**.

Why an Indian aspirant should care about a railway India is not on. The CKU line gives China an overland route into Central Asia that **bypasses Kazakhstan and Russia**. India's own access to the same region runs through **Chabahar** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor**, because Pakistan blocks overland transit. The contrast is the cleanest available illustration of a phrase worth carrying into the examination hall: India's Central Asia policy is **geographically ambitious but logistically constrained**.

THE TWO BILATERALS, AND THE ONE THAT IS NOT HAPPENING

Modi and Putin

A bilateral meeting is scheduled on the sidelines on **August 31**. It is the **first face-to-face meeting between the two since the annual summit of December 2025**. Reported agenda items are **crude oil and fertiliser supplies, the S-400 system and trade**. India's stated priority is uninterrupted energy and fertiliser flows against West Asian disruption.

Modi and Xi

No separate bilateral has been formally scheduled. The two leaders share the summit stage. This matters because the **25th round of Special Representatives talks on the boundary question** concluded in Beijing on **August 25, 2026** with an eight-point consensus, covered in the August 29 edition. Whether that thaw produces a leaders' meeting at Bishkek is precisely the question the summit answers, and it is not answered yet.

THE CHAIRMANSHIP PROBLEM

Pakistan takes over the rotating chairmanship after this summit and will host the annual summit in 2027.

This is the structurally significant fact of Bishkek for India, and it will outlast every declaration paragraph.

THE CHAIRMANSHIP QUESTION	CONSEQUENCE FOR INDIA
The chair sets the agenda	A Pakistan-chaired year shapes what the SCO discusses
The chair hosts the summit	The 2027 leaders' summit is in Pakistan
Attendance is a signal	India's level of representation becomes a decision with meaning
Precedent exists	India hosted a virtual summit in 2023, which showed a host can lower the temperature

The honest framing for an answer. India has never treated the SCO as a first-order platform, and a serious line of commentary argues India's use for the organisation is diminishing. The counter-argument is that the SCO is the **only standing multilateral body that seats India, China, Pakistan, Russia and Iran together**, which makes it valuable precisely because it is uncomfortable. Both readings are defensible. What is not defensible is writing that Bishkek produced a breakthrough before the declaration is published.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and affecting India's interests. The SCO is a standing Prelims subject and its structure, membership sequence and permanent bodies are directly examinable.

GS Paper 2: Effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests. The chairmanship transfer to Pakistan is a governance question about a multilateral body, not a bilateral irritant, and should be written that way.

A Mains question you should be able to structure in five sentences. "Central Asia is geographically distant but strategically integral to India's extended neighbourhood. Examine." Structure: the Connect Central Asia framing, the energy and critical-minerals interest, the connectivity constraint through Pakistan, the Chabahar and [INSTC](#) workaround, and the SCO as the institutional seat.

 FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA**THE BISHKEK SUMMIT:**

The 26th SCO Summit is at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on August 31 and September 1, 2026.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov is the host; Modi, Xi Jinping and Putin are present.

Pakistan takes the SCO rotating chairmanship after the Bishkek summit and hosts in 2027.

A Modi-Putin bilateral is scheduled for August 31; no Modi-Xi bilateral was announced.

The Modi-Putin meeting is their first in person since the annual summit of December 2025.

The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway runs over 500 km and is costed at about 4.7 billion dollars.

Implementation of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway began in December 2024.

THE ORGANISATION:

The SCO was founded on June 15, 2001 at Shanghai; 2026 is its twenty-fifth year.

Its predecessor grouping was the Shanghai Five, formed in 1996.

The SCO has 10 member states; India and Pakistan were admitted in 2017 at Astana.

Iran was admitted to the SCO in 2023 and Belarus in 2024.

The SCO Secretariat is at Beijing; the RATS Executive Committee is at Tashkent.

Nurlan Yermekbayev of Kazakhstan is SCO Secretary-General for 2025 to 2027.

Ularbek Sharshiev directs the SCO RATS Executive Committee.

Russian and Chinese are the SCO's two official languages.

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

The 25th round of India-China Special Representatives talks concluded in Beijing on August 25, 2026.

India hosted the SCO summit in virtual format in 2023.

Chabahar port and the INSTC are India's workarounds for the lack of overland access to Central Asia.

Sources: The Tribune, Outlook India, TASS, SCO Secretariat

Source: Bishkek Opens: The SCO Turns 25, and Pakistan Takes the Chair Next — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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