

## **PM Modi to attend SCO summit in Tashkent tomorrow**

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**Tashkent:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive here tomorrow to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a China-dominated six-nation grouping, which is likely to focus on exploring ways to enhance security cooperation to combat terrorism.

### ***PM Narendra Modi***

India, along with Pakistan, is set to be inducted as full members into the bloc which mainly deals with issues relating to security and defence.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend the two-day 16th annual summit of bloc to be held in the Uzbek capital. Pakistan will be represented by President Mamnoon Hussain.

Modi is likely to have a bilateral meeting with Xi tomorrow on the sidelines of the summit. In the meeting, Modi is expected to seek China's support for India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

The two-day annual plenary session of the NSG will begin in Seoul tomorrow during which India's application for membership may come up for deliberation.

In the SCO summit, the leaders are expected to explore ways to deepen security cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Membership of the grouping will help India have a greater say in issues relating to security and defence.

Ensuring peace, stability and security in the region, building a just and rational international political and economic order and combating terrorism and extremism have been the major focus areas of the SCO in the last few years.

With majority of the SCO countries having huge reserves of oil and gas, India is expected to get greater access to major hydrocarbon projects in Central Asia after its entry into the bloc.

The SCO had set the ball rolling to make India a member of the bloc during its summit in Ufa, Russia in July last year when administrative hurdles were cleared to grant membership to India, Pakistan and Iran.

SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the Presidents of Russia, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

India, Iran and Pakistan were admitted as observers at the 2005 Astana Summit. The Tashkent SCO Summit in June 2010 had lifted the moratorium on new membership, paving the way for expansion of the grouping.

India feels as SCO member, it will be able to play a major role in addressing the threat of terrorism in the region.

India is also keen on deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.

India has been an observer at the SCO since 2005 and has generally participated in the ministerial-level meetings of the grouping which focus mainly on security and economic cooperation in the Eurasian region.

Russia has been favouring permanent SCO membership for India while China pushed for induction of Pakistan.

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