

India, Pakistan membership in SCO to be finalised in 2016: Russia

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Ufa (Russia): India and Pakistan will have to wait till next year to get full membership of the security and economic grouping the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a top Russian official today said, ahead of the six-nation bloc's leaders' summit here this week.

"India and Pakistan are not joining the SCO tomorrow. The process of engaging them is beginning," Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov said today.

He said their admission demands the coordination of a working memorandum and the two countries also need to join 28 key documents of the group.

"After that, as we hope, the membership of these two countries in the SCO will be finalised and we will be able to talk about our Group of Eight participants," he told Rossiya 24 TV channel.

As of now, India along with Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan has the observer status in the organisation which mainly focused on the anti-terrorism cooperation among the member states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive here tomorrow to attend the SCO summit.

This is the first time India will be represented at the Prime Ministerial level at the SCO summit.

The process of the two countries' accession to the SCO, which consists of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, kicks off this week at the summit here, the Itar-Tass news agency reported.

"The membership of India and Pakistan in the SCO will be finalised by the next meeting of the leaders in 2016 in India," Ushakov added.

To pave the way for admission of India and Pakistan, SCO members had approved two key documents regarding the procedure for granting membership and the obligations of states applying for it in the leaders' summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in September.

- PTI