

SCO TERROR MEET STARTS, OFFICIALS FROM CHINA, PAK., RUSSIA IN DELHI

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PM Narendra Modi meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping during SCO summit in Qingdao, China in 2018PTIPTI

Counter-terror officials of Pakistan, Russia, China and four Central Asian countries met in Delhi on Monday at the start of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Regional Anti-Terror Structure (SCO-RATS) talks, the first such event in India since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's transgressions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The meeting, which was closed to the press, is one of a number of events planned this year as India assumed its role as Chairperson of the SCO-RATS mechanism.

In October this year, all member countries will send security forces personnel for joint anti-terror exercises expected to be held at the National Security Guard facility in Manesar. While India and Pakistan have close to no bilateral engagement, both countries make a point of attending the nine-nation SCO meetings, and last year, India had sent a delegation to Pakistan to take part in the 2021 edition of the SCO-RATS exercises. And all eyes will be on 2023, when India is due to host the SCO summit, which could see leaders of Pakistan and China participate, despite the tensions in bilateral ties.

The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) under National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, which organised the meeting that included officials from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), declined to comment on the agenda and expected outcome of the meetings from May 16 to 19.

Meanwhile, India reacted sharply to a statement by the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), of which at least six of the countries participating in Monday's SCO-RATS meetings are members, which had criticised the government's proposed moves on delimitation of electoral constituencies in Jammu & Kashmir.

"We are dismayed that the OIC Secretariat has once again made unwarranted comments on the internal affairs of India," said the MEA spokesperson in a statement, "categorically rejecting" the 57-member grouping's assertions.

"OIC should refrain from carrying out its communal agenda vis-à-vis India at the behest of one country," the spokesperson added, in a veiled reference to Pakistan.

Earlier in the day, the OIC General Secretariat issued a statement of "deep concern" over what it called India's attempts to redraw the electoral boundaries in Jammu & Kashmir.

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