

27 JULY 2023

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SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

GS – 2 (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

SOURCE: [TH](#)

RECENT CONTEXT : Shanghai Cooperation Organization member-states should strengthen strategic communication, deepen practical cooperation, and support each other's development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SCO IN PRESENT TIMES:

- **Culture and people-to-people exchanges:** The SCO has been promoting cultural and people-to-people exchanges between its members.
 - **EG:** The SCO has also established a number of working groups and expert groups on issues such as counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, and energy cooperation.
- **Regional connectivity:** The SCO has established a free trade zone and has been working to promote investment in the region.
 - **EG:** In 2021, the SCO launched a new trade and investment initiative called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
- **Trade and investment:** The SCO has established a free trade zone and has been working to promote investment in the region.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC:

- **MEMBERS:** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan.
- **LANGUAGE:** The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- India and Pakistan became permanent members in 2017.
- With the exception of Uzbekistan, the remaining five nations were members of the 'Shanghai Five,' an organization formed by China in 1996 to address border security concerns with four neighbouring countries.
- 3 Observer states - the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, Mongolia.

The organization consists of two enduring entities:

1. The SCO Secretariat, located in Beijing.
2. The Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent.

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- **EG:** The SCO Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed in 2019. The FTA is a comprehensive agreement that eliminates tariffs on most goods traded between the member states of the SCO.
- **Energy:** The SCO countries have a wealth of energy resources, and the organization has been working to develop these resources and to promote energy cooperation.
 - **EG:** The SCO Cooperation Programme in the Field of Renewable Energy

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF SCO:

- To enhance the bond of trust and friendship among the countries involved.
- To facilitate productive collaboration in various fields such as trade, politics, research, economy, technology, culture, education, transportation, energy, environmental preservation, and tourism.
- To work together in maintaining and securing peace, stability, and security within the region.
- To progress towards creating a new, democratic, fair, and rational global political and economic system.

CHALLENGES FACED BY SCO IN PRESENT TIMES:

1. **Security Concerns:** The region covered by the SCO faces various security challenges, including terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
 - a. **EG:** Activities of terrorist groups in Afghanistan and Central Asian countries.
2. **Geopolitical Tensions:** The SCO member states have diverse geopolitical interests and alliances, leading to potential tensions within the organization.
 - a. **EG:** India and Pakistan, both SCO members, have historically strained relations.
3. **Environmental Concerns:** Climate change and environmental degradation pose significant challenges to the region.
 - a. **EG:** Tensions have risen between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over the management of water resources in the Amu Darya river basin.
4. **External Influences:** External powers' involvement in the region can impact the dynamics of the SCO.
 - a. **EG** .The competition between China and the United States for influence in Central Asia

WAY FORWARD:

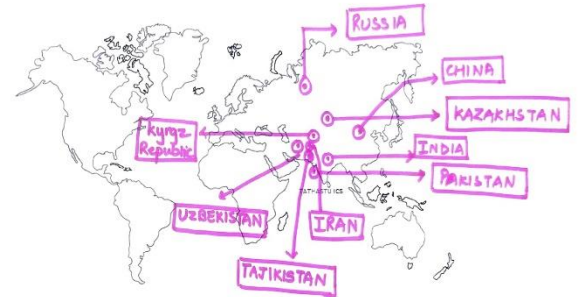
- **Advancing Technological Collaboration:** The member states can pool their resources to develop cutting-edge technologies in areas like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and space exploration.

- **Facilitating resolution in regional disputes:** SCO can serve as an impartial forum to mediate conflicts among its member states promoting open dialogue and reconciliation to mitigate the risk of heightened hostilities.

* Iran is 9th members of SCO.

- **Strengthening Regional Security Cooperation: Strengthening Regional Security Cooperation:**

The SCO member states should enhance intelligence-sharing and joint military exercises to counter terrorism and extremism in the region.



- **Fostering Energy Cooperation:**

The SCO countries can collaborate on developing and utilizing energy resources within the region.



FOREST CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

GS 3 (ENVIRONMENT)

SOURCE: [TH](#)

CONTEXT : LOK SABHA PASSES FOREST AMENDMENT BILL

HIGHLIGHTS OF BILL

- Applies to specific types of land which includes land that has been declared as a forest under **The Indian Forest Act, 1927**, or in government records after the 1980 Act was implemented. However, the Act will not apply to land that was converted for non-forest purposes **before December 12, 1996**.
- Excludes specific types of land from the scope of the Act including land within 100 km of India's border required for national security projects, small roadside facilities, and public roads leading to a settlement.
- State government needs permission from the central government before giving forest land to a private company.
- Specifies some activities that can be carried out in forests, such as establishing check posts, fencing, and bridges, running zoos, safaris and eco-tourism facilities.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC:

FEATURES	RESERVED FOREST	PROTECTED FOREST
Purpose	To protect the forest's natural resources, such as timber and wildlife	To protect the forest's natural resources and to provide a habitat for wildlife
Activities allowed	Lumbering, grazing, and hunting are banned	hunting and lumbering are banned
Management	Managed by the Forest Department	Managed by the Forest Department, but local communities may have some involvement in management decision
Status	More than half of the forest area in India is reserved forest	About one-third of the forest area in India is protected forest.

KEY FEATURES OF THE BILL:


1. **Land under the purview of the Act:** The Bill provides that two types of land will be under the purview of the Act:
 - a. Land declared/notified as a forest under **the Indian Forest Act, 1927** or under any other law.
 - b. Land not covered in the first category but notified as a forest on or after October 25, 1980 in a government record.

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- c. Act will not apply to land changed from forest use to non-forest use on or before **December 12, 1996** by any authority authorised by a state/UT.
- 2. Exempted categories of land:** Such as **forest land along a rail line or a public road** maintained by the government. **Forest land exempted includes:**
- Land **situated within 100 km from international borders, Line of Control, or Line of Actual Control, for construction of a strategic linear project of national importance** and concerning national security.
 - Land up to **10 hectares, for constructing security-related infrastructure.**
 - Land proposed to be used for constructing defence related projects, camps for paramilitary forces, or public utility projects up to five hectares in a left-wing extremism affected area.
- 3. Leasing of forest land:** The new Bill extends the requirement for approval from the central government before assigning forest land to any entity, whether it is government-owned or not. The central government will also set the terms and conditions for such approvals.
- 4. Permitted activities in forest land:** The Act lists activities exempted from non-forest purposes, meaning **they are allowed on forest land**. These activities involve conserving, managing, and developing forests and wildlife, like setting **up check posts, fire lines, fencing, and wireless communication**. Bill adds more activities to this list such as:
- zoos and safaris under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 owned by the government or any authority, in forest areas other than protected areas,
 - ecotourism facilities,
 - Silvicultural operations (enhancing forest growth), and
 - Any other purpose specified by the central government.
 - The central government may specify terms and conditions to exclude any survey (such as exploration activity, seismic survey) from being classified as non-forest purpose.
- 5. Power to issue directions:** The Bill adds that the central government may issue directions for the implementation of the Act to any authority/organisation under or recognised by the centre, state, or union territory (UT).

KEY CHALLENGES:

- Certain types of forest land may be excluded:** The Bill amends the Act to cover specific forest lands, and exclude certain forest lands.
- Exclusion of land that has been recorded as a forest before October 25, 1980, but not notified as such:** The Supreme Court clarified the scope of the 1980 Act, stating that its

purpose is to address deforestation that disturbs the ecological balance. As a result, the Act should be applicable to all types of forests, regardless of their ownership or classification.

- 3. Exemption of land which changed from forest use to non-forest use before December 12, 1996:** The Bill declares that any land that transitioned from forest to non-forest use prior to the date of the judgment will not fall under the scope of the 1980 Act. By including this exemption, the Bill might be contradicting the ruling.
- 4. Exemptions near border areas would cover large parts of the north-eastern region:** Allowing diversion of forest land for construction of security-related projects and within 100 km of the international border/LoC/LAC may hasten the decline in forest cover in these areas.
- 5. Security projects:** Giving a blanket exemption for all security related projects may not be appropriate given the impact it may have on forest cover and biodiversity.

WAY FORWARD:

- Before presenting the Bill in Parliament, it is essential to seek further input from experts in the relevant field.
- As evidence of climate change and environmental degradation grows, the government should take this opportunity to reaffirm its strong commitment to safeguarding the country's abundant biodiversity.

NO TRUST MOTION

GS 2 POLITY

SOURCE: [TH](#), [IE](#)

CONTEXT: Lok Sabha Speaker accepts the no-confidence motion moved by the Opposition against the Modi government.

A no-confidence motion is a parliamentary motion that expresses lack of confidence in the government. In India, a no-confidence motion can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament of India)

Article 75(3) of our Constitution embodies this rule by specifying that the Council of Ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.

PROCEDURE OF PASSING MOTION:

- **Introduction of the motion:** In the Lok Sabha, any Member of Parliament can introduce a no-confidence motion. To do so, the member must submit a **written notice** of the motion to the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha at least 10 days prior** to its presentation. This notice needs to be signed by a minimum of **50 members of Parliament**.
- **Grant of leave:** After the no-confidence motion is presented, the Lok Sabha Speaker must assess its validity and proper submission before deciding whether to permit its introduction. If the motion is found to be in order and correctly proposed, the Speaker can grant leave for its introduction.
- **Discussion:** If permission is given, the Lok Sabha will deliberate on the no-confidence motion. The Prime Minister holds the privilege of speaking first in the course of the discussion. Subsequently, the leader of the opposition party is entitled to express their views.
- **Voting:** After the debate, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha calls for a vote. If the majority of Lok Sabha members support the motion, it is passed; otherwise, it is defeated.

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ADVANTAGES OF NO CONFIDENCE MOTION:

It can hold the government accountable: A no-confidence motion can be used to express dissatisfaction with the government's performance. If the motion is passed, it can force the government to change course or even resign.

It can lead to new elections: If a no-confidence motion is passed, it can lead to the collapse of the government and the calling of new elections. This gives the people a chance to vote for a new government.

It can strengthen democracy: A no-confidence motion is a sign of a strong and vibrant democracy. It allows the people to have a say in how their government is run and to hold it accountable for its Actions.

CONCLUSION:

No-confidence motions serve as a potent means of ensuring government accountability. They provide a platform to express discontent with the government's actions, compel it to alter its direction, and in some cases, trigger fresh elections.

FEATURES	NO CONFIDENCE MOTION	CENSURE MOTION
PURPOSE	To express lack of confidence in the government.	To express disapproval of the government's actions
INTRODUCTION	Any member of Parliament	Only a member of the opposition party
Number of supporters required	At least 50 members of Parliament	Not applicable
What happens if it is passed?	The government is defeated and the Prime Minister must resign.	The government is not defeated, but the minister or ministers against whom the motion was moved are censured

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