

Artificial Intelligence, Innovation, and Inclusion: Multilateral Technology Cooperation within the SCO Framework

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During the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Tianjin, China; the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi noted that India seeks greater action under three pillars – Security, Connectivity and Opportunity. While dwelling on Opportunity, he insisted on mutual opportunities in the fields of start-ups, innovation, youth empowerment and shared heritage and proposed commencing a Civilizational Dialogue Forum within the group to foster greater people-to-people ties and cultural understanding.

Following the Summit meeting, leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states issued a joint statement on further advancing cooperation in science, technology, and innovation. The leaders stressed that further scientific and technological collaboration within the SCO framework is crucial. They pledged to pursue mutually beneficial and equitable cooperation, promote shared development, and jointly explore new models and channels of partnership to boost innovation capacity and deepen collaboration in science and technology.

The SCO discussion on scientific cooperation was focused on energy, infrastructure, the digital economy, science and technology innovation, and artificial intelligence. India joined other SCO members to deepen cooperation in Artificial Intelligence (AI), underscoring its strategic role in shaping societies and economies. The Tianjin Declaration reaffirmed commitments to AI among other sectors. The declaration built on the UN General Assembly Resolution on AI capacity building and underlined that all countries have equal rights to develop and use AI. SCO members,

including India, pledged to work together to prevent risks and improve the security, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, and fairness of AI technologies for the benefit of humanity. They also endorsed the Roadmap for the Implementation of the SCO Member States' Cooperation Programme on AI Development (Chengdu, June 12, 2025). The summit also drew attention with the deployment of a humanoid AI robot named Xiao, which assisted media personnel and attendees with various tasks. Xiao's advanced capabilities and human-like design attracted wide interest and admiration at the event.

On the side lines of this meeting, SCO Science-Technology Innovation Cooperation Center was inaugurated in Qingdao in Shandong province for advancing the building of a community with a shared future for humanity through science and technology innovation cooperation. It aims to build itself into a vital hub for scientific and technological cooperation among SCO countries and contribute technological strength to the construction of an SCO community with a shared future. The center plans to focus on four main areas: enhancing scientific and technological exchanges through brand-name events; advancing joint research and development in critical sectors; building a technology transfer network by improving services related to intellectual property rights, financial empowerment and international technology transfer intermediaries; and establishing an international think tank to enable in-depth discussions on science and technology innovation policies and practical experiences, thereby offering intellectual support for global cooperation.

As a follow up, On September 25-26, 2025, the Second International Conference of Young Authors of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the topic 'Dynamics of Creative Spaces in the Digital Age' was held in New Delhi. A number of initiatives are being implemented through the SCO Youth Council, including in the field of entrepreneurship. It was noted that such Conference is an effective platform for exchanging views between young talents, generating innovative ideas, including digital technologies, which will further strengthen youth exchanges between the Organization's Member States, said Minara Rakhanova, Adviser to the SCO Secretariat. The meeting of SCO Young Scientists and Young Innovators are planned to be held in due course of time.