Diminishing returns: On India and its Shanghai Cooperation Organisation engagement

India benefitted as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, but the future is not bright

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation-Council of Heads of State meeting, hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, marked the first time India chaired the summit of regional countries. India became a full SCO member in 2017, along with Pakistan. The government has held that joining the originally Eurasian group was important as member-countries make up a third of the global GDP, a fifth of global trade, a fifth of global oil reserves and about 44% of natural gas reserves. Also important is its focus on regional security and connectivity — areas key to India's growth and making up its challenges, such as terrorism in Pakistan, and Chinese aggressions as well as the Belt and Road Initiative. Being "inside the tent" is important, especially as Pakistan is a member, even if that means conducting joint exercises under the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. The SCO also gives India an interface with Central Asian markets and resources. Finally, joining the SCO was a key part of India's stated ambitions on "multi-alignment" and "strategic autonomy" while becoming a "balancing power" in the world, and it seems no coincidence that the Modi government joined the revived Quad with the U.S., Japan and Australia in the same year that it took up the full SCO membership. Over the past year, this has become an economic necessity as India has chosen to be neutral on the Ukraine war, benefiting from fuel and fertilizer purchases from Russia.

Therefore, it was expected that India's turn to chair the SCO this year would be a major event, rivalling the expected pomp around the G-20 meet in September. In addition, given Russia's and China's **blocks** on the G-20 joint **communiqué** that India is keen to find **consensus** on, the SCO summit would have been a convenient venue for Mr. Modi to **negotiate** a resolution with his **counterparts**. However, India's decision to postpone the SCO summit due to the Prime Minister's U.S. State visit, and then to **turn it into** a **virtual** summit **may** have been a **dampener** on the SCO **outcomes**. India's concerns with hosting Xi Jinping given the LAC hostilities, or Pakistan Prime Minister Sharif's possible 'grandstanding', or even the optics of welcoming Russian President Vladimir Putin may have been factors. Whatever the reason, while the members hammered out a New Delhi declaration and joint statements on radicalisation and digital transformation, the government was unable to forge consensus on other agreements including one on making English a formal SCO language, while India, despite being Chair, did not endorse a road map on economic cooperation, presumably due to concerns over China's imprint. With its SCO chairpersonship ending, the government may now be feeling the law of diminishing returns over its SCO engagement — one that might make its task of [Practice Exercise] hosting the G-20 even more difficult.

• Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

- 1. Diminishing (adjective) shrinking decreasing, reducing, lessening, falling घटता हुआ
- 2. **Return** (noun) yield, profit, gain, dividend, benefit লাभ
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (noun) – a Eurasian political, economic, international security and defence organization established by China and Russia in 2001. शंघाई सहयोग संगठन
- 4. Engagement (noun) association, involvement, participation सहभागिता
- 5. Head of state (noun) the official leader of a country राज्य के प्रमुख
- 6. **Mark** (verb) indicate, signify, represent, show दर्शाना
- 7. **Chair** (verb) lead, direct, preside over, be in charge of, be in control of अध्यक्षता करना
- 8. Summit (noun) meeting, conference, conclave शिखर सम्मेलन
- 9. Eurasian (adjective) relating to Eurasia यूरेशियाई
- 10. **Make up** (phrasal verb) constitute, comprise, form, compose, represent बनाना
- 11. **Make up** (phrasal verb) make amends for, compensate for, atone for,

counterweigh, counterbalance, neutralize प्रतिपूर्ति करना

- 12. Aggression (noun) hostility, belligerence, combativeness, warmongering, hawkishness आक्रमण
- 13. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (noun) a strategy initiated by the People's Republic of China that seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.
- 14. **Exercise** (noun) activity, , manoeuvres, operations
- 15. Interface (noun) contact, connection, association, relation संपर्क
- 16. **Stated** (adjective) expressed, announced, specified बताया हुआ
- 17. **Ambition** (noun) Aim, objective, aspiration, hope, desire, goal महत्वाकांक्षा
- 18. Multi-alignment (noun) a series of parallel relationships that strengthen multilateral partnerships and seek a common approach among the grouping towards security, economic equity and the elimination of existential dangers like terrorism.
- 19. Strategic autonomy (noun) the ability of a state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without depending heavily on other foreign states.

- 20. **Coincidence** (noun) Concurrence, correspondence, correlation, relationship संयोग
- 21. **Revived** (adjective) restored, revitalized, renewed पुनर्जीवित
- 22. Quad (noun) a strategic security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the United States that is maintained by talks between member countries.
- 23. **Take up** (phrasal verb) –begin to hold or fulfil a position or post संभालना (पदभार)
- 24. **Necessity** (noun) importance, top priority, exigency, seriousness आवश्यकता
- 25. **Neutral** (adjective) fair-minded, evenhanded, non-participating, unaligned, impartial, unbiased, non-partisan निष्पक्ष
- 26. **Rival** (verb) be a match for, bear comparison with, keep up with, बराबरी करना
- 27. **Pomp** (noun) ritual, splendor, display, ceremony धूमधाम
- 28. G-20 (noun) the premier forum for international economic cooperation. It plays an important role in shaping and strengthening global architecture and governance on all major international economic issues. India holds the Presidency of the G20 from 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023.

- 29. **Given** (preposition) considering, taking into account, bearing in mind. देखते हुए
- 30. **Block** (noun) obstruction, impediment, hindrance, stoppage, barrier. रोक
- 31. **Communiqué** (noun) official communication विज्ञप्ति
- 32. **Keen** (adjective) ready, prepared, interested in. उत्सुक
- 33. **Consensus** (noun) a general agreement. सर्वसम्मति
- 34. **Negotiate** (verb) talk, hold talks, consult together. बातचीत करना
- 35. **Counterpart** (noun) equivalent, equal, fellow. समकक्ष
- 36. **Turn into** (phrasal verb) change into something different. में बदल जाना
- 37. Virtual (adjective) Online.
- 38. **Dampener** (noun) a thing has a subduing effect. निराशाजनक
- 39. **Outcome** (noun) result, consequence, aftermath, effect. परिणाम
- 40. Line of Actual Control (LAC) (noun) a notional demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinesecontrolled territory in the Sino-Indian border dispute.

- 41. Hostility (noun) opposition, conflict, resentment, enmity, aversion, antipathy. शत्र्ता
- 42. **Grandstanding** (noun) acting or speaking in a way intended to attract attention and to influence the opinion of people who are watching. धूमधाम
- 43. **Optics** (noun) the public's opinion and understanding of a situation after seeing it as the media shows it, and the possible political effects of this. धारणा
- 44. Hammer out (phrasal verb) produce, bring about, forge, develop.; laboriously work out the details of a plan or agreement. प्रस्त्त करना
- 45. New Delhi Declaration (noun) The Indian government coined the New Delhi Declaration and proposed at the SCO Summit, aiming to fight against terrorism. The Declaration also proposes four other joint statements on de-radicalisation,

sustainable lifestyle to tackle climate change, production of millets and digital transformation.

- 46. **Radicalization** (noun) the action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues. कट्टरता
- 47. Forge (verb) Create, build, construct, make, form. बनाना
- 48. Endorse (verb) support, recommend, favour, authorize, uphold. समर्थन करना
- 49. **Road map** (noun) plan to do something successfully. योजना
- 50. **Presumably** (adverb) probably, undoubtedly, seemingly, in all likelihood. संभवतः
- 51. Imprint (noun) effect, influence, impression, lasting impact. प्रभाव

Summary of the Editorial

- 1. The editorial discusses India's engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), noting that while India has benefited from being a member, the future appears uncertain.
- 2. India became a full member of the SCO in 2017 along with Pakistan, an originally Eurasian group that consists of countries making up one-third of the global GDP, a fifth of global trade, and significant portions of global oil and natural gas reserves.
- 3. The SCO's focus on regional security and connectivity is significant to India, providing a platform for addressing key challenges such as terrorism and Chinese aggressions.
- 4. Membership to the SCO also grants India access to Central Asian markets and resources.
- 5. India's engagement with the SCO aligns with its ambition for multi-alignment, strategic autonomy, and becoming a balancing power in the world.
- 6. India's neutrality on the Ukraine war allowed for beneficial fuel and fertilizer purchases from Russia.
- 7. The meeting chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was expected to be significant, possibly rivalling the G-20 meet scheduled for September.
- 8. India hoped to use the SCO summit to negotiate a resolution on the G-20 joint communiqué, which Russia and China have blocked.
- 9. However, the decision to postpone the SCO summit due to Modi's U.S. State visit, and later make it virtual, possibly dampened the impact of the summit.
- 10. Concerns about hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping amidst border tensions, or potential political posturing from Pakistan's Prime Minister, may have influenced the decision to hold a virtual summit.
- 11. While a New Delhi declaration and joint statements on radicalisation and digital transformation were agreed upon, consensus on other agreements was not achieved.
- 12. India, despite chairing the SCO, did not endorse a road map on economic cooperation, potentially due to concerns over China's influence.
- 13. An agreement on making English a formal SCO language did not come to fruition.
- 14. As India's chairpersonship of the SCO comes to an end, the government may be experiencing diminishing returns on its engagement with the organization.
- 15. The editorial concludes by suggesting that the challenges faced during India's SCO engagement might complicate its upcoming task of hosting the G-20 summit.

Practice Exercise: SSC Pattern Based

- 1. Based on the passage, which of the following statements best represents the reasoning behind India's decision to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation? [Editorial Page]
 - A. India wanted to increase its GDP.
 - B. India joined to create a balance of power in the world and enhance its strategic autonomy.
 - C. India wanted to leverage the SCO to conduct joint exercises with Pakistan under the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.
 - D. India wanted to partner with the U.S., Japan, and Australia in the Quad initiative.
- 2. What can be inferred about India's approach to its chairpersonship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) based on the passage?
 - A. India was completely invested in its role as the chair of the SCO.
 - B. India prioritised its U.S. state visit over the SCO summit.
 - C. India successfully managed to make English a formal SCO language.
 - D. India endorsed a road map on economic cooperation in the SCO
- 3. What were the outcomes of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit that was chaired by India?
 - A. The summit was postponed due to Prime Minister Modi's U.S. State visit.
 - B. The members were able to establish English as a formal SCO language.
 - C. The members forged a New Delhi declaration and joint statements on radicalisation and digital transformation.
 - D. India endorsed a roadmap on economic cooperation
- 4. What is the tone of the passage regarding India's engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)?
 - A. Optimistic
 - B. Indifferent
 - C. Pessimistic
 - D. Enthusiastic
- 5. What is the main theme of the passage?
 - A. The economic potential of India
 - B. The diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan
 - C. The challenges and prospects of India's engagement with the SCO
 - D. The impact of the Ukraine war on global politics
- 6. Select the most appropriate **ANTONYM** of the underlined word.

He was a cruel fiend

- A. Vile
- B. Junkie
- C. Saint
- D. Atrocious
- 7. Select the most appropriate ANTONYM for the word 'Incredible' in the following sentence. An almost incredible tale of triumph and tragedy
 - A. Strained
 - B. Far-fetched

- C. Implausible
- D. Believable
- 8. Select the option that expresses the given sentence in active/passive voice Kites have been bought by many children.
 - A. Many children have bought kites.
 - B. Many children had bought kites.
 - C. Many children bought kites.
 - D. Many children are buying kites.

9. Select the most appropriate option to fill in the blank.

The _____ chair was discarded by the tenant.

- A. broke
- B. broking
- C. broken
- D. break

10. Select the correct collocation from the options and complete the sentence

- Good ______, is it that time already?
- A. Sorrow
- B. Anguish
- C. Grief
- D. Misery

11. Select the option that can be used as a one-word substitute for the given group of words.

Tendency to escape from hard realities

- A. Bilingual
- B. Effervesce
- C. Escapism
- D. Equivocal

12. Select the option that can be used as a one-word substitute for the given group of words.

A sacred song or hymn

- A. Psalm
- B. Deprecate
- C. Herbarium
- D. Gynecologist

13. Select the option that expresses the given sentence in indirect/direct speech.

He asked me if I would like to learn French.

- A. He said to me, "Do you like to learn French?"
- B. He said to me, "Would you like to learn French?"
- C. He said to me, "You would like to learn French?"
- D. He said to me, "I would like to learn French."
- 14. Select the **INCORRECTLY** spelt word.
 - A. MOCKERY
 - B. CROCKERY
 - C. RELIGIOUS

- D. BENIDICTION
- 15. Sentences of a paragraph are given below in jumbled order. Arrange the sentences in the correct order to form a meaningful and coherent paragraph.
 - A. By all accounts, Koozhangal, India's official entry in the Best International Film Category at Oscars 2022, is an excellent movie.
 - B. And while such judgements are extremely subjective and often divisive, Koozhangal seems to possess great cinematic value and is a worthy candidate to be sent to the Oscars
 - C. Set in rural Tamil Nadu, Koozhangal which translates to 'pebbles' depicts the life of a small family going through emotional turmoil.
 - D. Based on a true story, Koozhangal has won praise and awards on the film festival circuit
 - A. ADBC
 - B. ABCD
 - C. BACD
 - D. ACDB

16. Select the option that will improve the underlined part of the given sentence.

I will accept the responsibility while a time comes.

- A. until a time
- B. whenever a time
- C. when the time
- D. No improvement
- 17. Sentences of a paragraph are given below in jumbled order. Arrange the sentences in the correct order to form a meaningful and coherent paragraph.
 - A. The Centre has preferred to be evasive ever since an international media consortium dropped the bombshell that Israeli firm NSO's spyware Pegasus was allegedly used to snoop on world leaders, journalists, human rights activists, political dissidents and others.
 - B. With the formation of a three-member committee of experts, the Supreme Court has set the ball rolling for an independent probe into the Pegasus snooping allegations
 - C. Over 300 verified Indian mobile phone numbers were on the list of potential targets for surveillance.
 - D. The court rightly rejected the Union Government's request to allow it to set up a panel to investigate the matter.
 - A. BCDA
 - B. BDAC
 - C. ACBD
 - D. DCBA
- 18. Sentences of a paragraph are given below in jumbled order. Arrange the sentences in the correct order to form a meaningful and coherent paragraph.
 - A. A state that has seen unprecedented emphasis on road-building, aimed at decongesting the national capital and boosting connectivity to the adjoining states to spur the development process, can ill-afford to neglect the maintenance of infrastructure.

- B. The need to guard against the hazards of lopsided development is evident from the deplorable condition of the village road leading to Kharkara from Bhatsana village in Dharuhera block of Haryana's Rewari district.
- C. While the Haryana Human Rights Commission has sought a report from the district authorities,
- D. The reason given for the problem that the inundation of the road took place due to the release of water from a dam to improve the water table in the area —indicates that there was no adequate monitoring by the authorities concerned to avoid inconvenience to people.
 - A. BACD
 - B. CADB
 - C. BCDA
 - D. DCBA
- 19. Sentences of a paragraph are given below in jumbled order. Arrange the sentences in the correct order to form a meaningful and coherent paragraph.
 - A. Moreover, electoral compulsions are likely to come into play in poll-bound Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.
 - B. The situation may worsen as the governments of both states are keen to avoid a confrontation with the farmers, who have been on the warpath since last year in protest against the three Central farm laws.
 - C. With the onset of paddy procurement, the eco-unfriendly practice of stubble burning has reappeared in parts of north India.
 - D. US space agency NASA's satellite images have shown scores of farm fires in Punjab and Haryana in the first week of October itself.
 - A. DACB
 - B. CDBA
 - C. DABC
 - D. ABCD

20. Select the most appropriate meaning of the given idiom.

The company owned them **body and soul**

- A. Life and death
- B. To solve a difficulty
- C. Happiness and sorrow
- D. Wholly and entirely

Answers

1. B	2. B	3. C	4. C	5. C	6. C	7. D	8. A	9. C	10. C		
13. B	14. D	15 D	16. C	17. B	18. A	19. B	20.D			[Pract	ice Exercise]

Explanation

1. B) India joined to create a balance of power in the world and enhance its strategic autonomy. The passage details multiple reasons for India's decision to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). It mentions the significant economic contributions of the member countries to the global GDP, trade, oil reserves, and natural gas reserves, which indicates a potential for economic gain (Option A). However, the most emphasized reason seems to be that joining the SCO aligns with India's ambitions for "multi-alignment" and "strategic autonomy" while becoming a "balancing power" in the world, best represented by Option B. Option C, while mentioned as a benefit, is not the primary reason according to the passage. And Option D, though related to India's global strategies, is not directly tied to the SCO membership.

2. B.) India prioritised its U.S. state visit over the SCO summit.

The passage suggests that India postponed the SCO summit due to the Prime Minister's U.S. State visit and turned it into a virtual summit, indicating a prioritisation of its relationship with the U.S. over the SCO summit. This reflects that the country possibly didn't leverage its SCO chairpersonship to the fullest extent. Options A, C, and D are incorrect because they do not align with the passage.

3. C) The members forged a New Delhi declaration and joint statements on radicalisation and digital transformation

According to the passage, during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit chaired by India, the members were able to hammer out a New Delhi declaration and joint statements on radicalisation and digital transformation. Although the event was postponed due to Prime Minister Modi's U.S. State visit and was eventually turned into a virtual summit, the decision to establish English as a formal SCO language and India's endorsement of a roadmap on economic cooperation were not achieved. The passage does not affirm that these objectives were met. Thus, Option C is the correct answer.

4. C) Pessimistic

The passage talks about how India has benefitted as a member of the SCO, but also mentions how its future involvement is not looking bright. There are concerns about various issues such as terrorism in Pakistan, Chinese aggression, and the lack of consensus on several agreements. The phrase "diminishing returns" in the title itself suggests a pessimistic outlook on the situation

5. C) The challenges and prospects of India's engagement with the SCO

The passage primarily discusses India's engagement with the SCO, covering its benefits and challenges. It details India's efforts and hurdles as a full member since 2017, along with the strategic importance of this membership in the context of regional security, connectivity, and economic interactions. Therefore, the main theme revolves around India's experience and potential future with the SCO.

- 6. C) Fiend (noun) –an evil spirit or demon. पिशाच, राक्षस
 - ≻ Vile (adjective) extremely unpleasant. नीच
 - ➤ Junkie (adjective) a drug addict.
 - Saint (noun) a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and regarded in Christian faith as being in heaven after death. संत
 - > Atrocious (adjective) horrifyingly wicked. अति-दुष्ट
- 7. D) Incredible (adjective) impossible to believe अविश्वसनीय
 - Strained (adjective) –Stressed, tensed, worried, nervous तनावपूर्ण
 - > Far-fetched (adjective) Unbelievable, implausible, incredible, fanciful अस्गम
 - > Implausible (adjective) Unlikely, improbable, unbelievable, doubtful अविश्वसनीय
 - > Believable (adjective) Credible, authentic, realistic, plausible विश्वसनीय
- 8. A) Many children have bought kites.
- 9. C) 'Broken' Option सबसे उचित होगा, क्योंकि यहां 'chair' subject को qualify करने के लिए एक adjective

की आवश्यकता है और 'broken' एक past participle (i.e. adjective) के रूप में कार्य करता है ।

- C) The phrase 'The _____ chair was discarded by the tenant' requires a past participle form (i.e. adjective) of the verb because The noun i.e. chair is required to be modified by adjective.
- 10. C) Good grief! (Phrase) an exclamation of surprise or alarm.
- 11. C) Escapism Tendency to escape from hard realities पलायनवाद
 - Bilingual One who can speak two languages द्वैभाषिक
 - Effervesce Give off bubbles of gas बुलबुले छोड़ना, उबाल आना
 - Equivocal Of doubtful character or sincerity; dubious संदिग्धार्थ
- 12. A) **Psalm** A sacred song or hymn भजन
 - Deprecate To feel or express disapproval of something or someone निरुत्साहित करना
 - Herbarium A place for the collection of dry plants सूखी वनस्पतियों का संग्राह
 - Gynecologist One who treats female problems प्रसूतिशास्री
- 13. B) He said to me, "Would you like to learn French?"
- 14. D) Benediction (noun) Approval, sanction, blessing आशीर्वाद
 - Mockery (noun) Ridicule, scorn, derision, disdain, contempt उपहास
 - > Crockery (noun) Cutlery, tableware, earthenware, बरतन
 - Religious (adjective) Spiritual, sacred, devout, pious धार्मिक

15. D) ACDB

A: This sentence is the first because it introduces the topic, the movie "Koozhangal" and its achievement.

C: After introducing the movie, this sentence follows to give us more information about what the movie is about.

D: This sentence connects to the previous one because it adds more details about the movie, explaining that it's based on a true story and has won awards.

B: This sentence wraps up the paragraph by sharing an opinion about the movie, saying it's a good choice for the Oscars.

16. C) 'when the time' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि वाक्य में 'जब समय आएगा' या 'सही समय पर' की बात की गई

है। इसके लिए 'when the time' सही option है। यहां 'while' का प्रयोग गलत है क्योंकि 'while' का अर्थ होता

है 'जबकि' जो यहां सही नहीं है।

The use of "while" is incorrect here. The phrase "while a time" is not grammatically correct or idiomatic in this context. The word "while" is typically used to indicate something happening at the same time as another event or during the period of time that something is happening.

17. B) BDAC

B: This sentence is first because it introduces the main topic: a group of experts starting an investigation into some "snooping" (or spying) problem related to something called Pegasus.

D: This sentence connects to the first one because it talks about the same investigation and tells us that the court (the judges) said "no" to the government when they wanted to set up their own group to look into the problem. It follows sentence B because it expands on who was denied the right to investigate.

A: Sentence A comes next because it explains why there's an investigation. It tells us that there was big news about a company's spy tool (Pegasus) being used to spy on important people. It's the reason why the investigation mentioned in sentences B and D is happening.

C: This is the last sentence because it gives us a detail about the spying problem: over 300 Indian phone numbers were possibly spied on.

18. A) **BACD**

B: This sentence talks about a specific problem - the poor condition of a village road. It's a good starting point because it introduces the issue that the paragraph will talk about.

A: This sentence talks about how important road-building is for the state, but also points out that maintenance is being neglected. This connects to Sentence B because it's giving a broader context to the problem mentioned in Sentence B - it's not just this road that's in bad condition, but many roads.

C: This sentence tells us that the Human Rights Commission is getting involved. It links back to Sentence A because it's showing a reaction to the problem discussed in Sentence A and B - authorities are starting to take notice.

D: This sentence gives the reason why the road is in bad condition and highlights the lack of monitoring by authorities. It connects back to Sentence C because it provides more details about the issue that the Human Rights Commission is looking into.

19. B.) CDBA

C: It says that with the start of paddy (a type of rice plant) collection, the practice of burning leftover crops (stubble burning) has started again in north India. This is the first sentence because it introduces the main problem, which is stubble burning.

D: This is connected to sentence C because it provides evidence for the problem introduced in sentence C - stubble burning.

B: This connects to sentence D because it talks about why the problem of stubble burning could increase. It introduces the farmers and their protests, which are related to the issue of stubble burning.

A: This sentence tells us that the upcoming elections in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh could also affect the situation. It's connected to sentence B because it adds another layer to the problem. The governments may avoid dealing with the stubble burning and the protesting farmers because of these elections.

20. D) Body and soul (phrase) – Wholly and entirely पूरी तरह से



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