



Military Medicine Conference

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India is hosting the **first conference of Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** in New Delhi from 12th-13th September 2019.

- Also, this is the first military cooperation event, being hosted by India, after it joined SCO in June 2017.
- The conference has been organised by the Indian Armed Forces supported by **Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS)**.
- The primary objectives of the conference are **to share best practices in the field of military medicine**, build capacities and overcome common challenges.
- Deliberations are taking place between military medicine experts of SCO Member States on **rendering of combat medical support, humanitarian assistance during disasters** and **measures to improve patient safety**.
- The Defence Minister of India has called upon the **Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)** of SCO countries to devise ways to effectively deal with new threats posed to soldiers by the ever-advancing battlefield technology.
 - In India, the **Directorate General Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS)** is **an apex organization** which coordinates the medical services of the Army, Navy and Air Force.
 - It is under the Ministry of Defence, headed by a Lieutenant General (Lt Gen)/equivalent officer of Navy or Air Force.
- The conference gains importance in the background of building capabilities to **deal with the menace of bioterrorism**, a real threat the world is facing today.

The **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states **against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism**. It is **headquartered in Tashkent**.

Bio-terrorism

- A biological attack or bioterrorism is the **intentional release of viruses, bacteria, or other germs that can sicken or kill people, livestock, or crops**.
- Bacillus anthracis, the bacteria that causes anthrax, is one of the most likely agents to

be used in a biological attack.

- In the Indian context, with the existence of hostile neighbours like Pakistan, the threat of biological warfare cannot be ruled out entirely.

India's Preparedness

- Several nodal ministries have been earmarked for dealing with epidemics caused by bioterrorism.
 - **Early Detection: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** is tasked with providing directions and technical support for capacity building, surveillance and **early detection of an outbreak**.
 - **Assessment of Threat: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** is responsible for the assessment of the threat, intelligence inputs and implementation of preventive mechanisms.
 - **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** is a specialised force constituted under MHA to deal with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) attacks.
 - **Biowarfare: The Ministry of Defence (MoD)** is responsible for managing the matters and **consequences of biowarfare**.
 - The **Defence R&D Organization (DRDO)** is actively pitched into developing **protective systems and equipment** for troops to contend against nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.
- India has ratified the **Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)**, which effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons and is a key element in the international community's efforts to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- India is one of the participants in **the Australia Group**, an informal arrangement which aims to allow exporting or transshipping countries to minimise the risk of assisting chemical and biological weapon (CBW) proliferation.

Source: PIB