Syllabus subtopic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

News: The latest edition of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue is being held in India.

Prelims and Mains focus: SCO- objectives, members, functions, significance, various organs and issues associated, SCOJTEX.

Key facts:

- **Hosted** by NDRF (National Disaster Response Force).
- **Aim** to rehearse the disaster response mechanism, share knowledge, experience, technology & also for mutual coordination, etc.
- **The participants of all 08 member countries** namely China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan shall be participating in this exercise.
- **Main focus shall be** to test the region’s preparedness and resilience towards effective activation of Inter- governmental interaction for immediate response.

About SCO:

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, also known as the Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai.

- **Founding members**: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001.

- **The SCO’s main goals are**: strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

- Presently, the SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the
Republic of Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

- **The SCO counts four observer states**, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia.

- **The SCO has six dialogue partners**, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.