

'Big tech firms should be accountable'

Social media platforms should be held answerable to national laws: Jaishankar

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Big tech companies that harvest data of Indians should be held accountable, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at an interaction with former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair at the India Global Forum 2021.

Answering a question, he pointed out that countries had responded "nationally" to an international problem like the current pandemic. He urged the world to come together to deal with the differing approach to vaccines.

"Right now a big debate on big tech is going on in different parts of the world, in-



S. Jaishankar

cluding a vigorous one in India. Nobody denies that these are forces of progress that are taking us in directions and opening up new vistas that we could not have

imagined. But in a democratic society we have to ask ourselves, big tech is there in my life, but where is the responsibility [of the big tech]? You have a huge power but where is the accountability," the External Affairs Minister stated.

Whether to hold big tech companies accountable was being viewed as a "governance issue and a democratic issue" by some. International relation was created to include states but the role of "non- state players who are in some ways bigger than many states" needed to be "seriously debated".

The Minister's remarks

have added to the ongoing tussle between Twitter and the Government of India (GoI), which has accused the former of non-compliance of national laws. Mr. Jaishankar hinted that social media platforms should be held answerable to national laws.

"This is not an issue limited to India. They harvest our data as they do across the world. So you have in a sense the opposite of the American revolution. You have representation but no taxation," he stressed, arguing that these issues should be taken up in a discussion that he described as a "very legitimate debate".