

# Afghanistan's future can't be its past: Jaishankar

World won't legitimise Taliban regime if it takes power by force, he says at SCO meet

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The world will not legitimise a Taliban regime that comes to power in Kabul by force, indicated External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday, amid rapid advances made by the militant group on towns and border checkpoints in various parts of Afghanistan.

Speaking at the "Contact Group" meeting of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Dushanbe, Mr. Jaishankar said the future of Afghanistan "cannot be its past", referring to the previous takeover of the country by the Taliban in 1996. The meeting also issued a joint statement decrying the violence.

He added that the world "must not let" the new gen-



**Renewing ties:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with his counterparts from the SCO grouping in Dushanbe. ■PTI

eration of Afghans down.

"The world is against seizure of power by violence and force. It will not legitimise such actions," Mr. Jaishankar told the meeting, which included Ministers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

Instead, Mr. Jaishankar said, peace negotiations would need to result in an

"acceptable compromise" that reflected the Doha, Moscow and Istanbul-Heart of Asia processes, and produced an "end state" that ensured a democratic and neutral Afghanistan free from terrorist attacks on civilians and ethnic groups, and a neighbourhood that was not threatened by "terrorism separatism and extremism".

The representatives of the

SCO countries, including Mr. Jaishankar, will travel on Thursday to Tashkent along with the representatives of nearly 40 countries for a "Central and South Asia" connectivity conference that will see Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani take centre stage together for the meeting hosted by Uzbekistan President Shovkat Mirziyoyev. U.S. Special Envoy on Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad will also attend the meeting.

Mr. Jaishankar is expected to call on Mr. Ghani on Thursday and meet Mr. Khalilzad during his two-day stay in Tashkent.

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8**  
**LAC IMPASSE IMPACTING TIES,**  
**WANG TOLD ► PAGE 9**