

Jaishankar pushes for Chabahar port

No talks announced at SCO meet in Tashkent with Chinese, Pakistan and Taliban Foreign Ministers

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NEW DELHI

India welcomed the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to include Iran next year, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar shared a table with Foreign Ministers of China Wang Yi, Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto, Russia Sergey Lavrov and central Asian countries at the ministerial meeting in Tashkent on Friday.

While India pushed for Chabahar port to be a conduit for trade to central Asia, Pakistan's Foreign Minister promoted the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for trans-regional trade, including in a meeting with Taliban-appointed Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

Mr. Jaishankar held bilat-



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar (left) during the SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting, in Tashkent. ■PTI

eral talks with his counterparts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but no meetings with Mr. Bhutto, Mr. Wang or Mr. Muttaqi, who was also in Tashkent for a special SCO reach out, were announced. Although the MEA release made no mention of it, the Russian embassy in Delhi tweeted that Mr. Jaishankar

also held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Lavrov while in Tashkent, where it said they discussed bilateral ties.

Help to Afghanistan

Mr. Jaishankar highlighted India's assistance to Afghanistan at the meeting. "Reiterated India's position on Afghanistan and highlighted

our humanitarian support: wheat, medicines, vaccines and clothing," Mr. Jaishankar said after the meetings, adding that he had underlined the potential for Iran's Chabahar for the "SCO's economic future".

The External Affairs Minister said he had also raised the problems of the energy crisis and food crisis arising from the "Ukraine conflict", making no mention of Russia's role in the conflict, as well as from the COVID pandemic.

"[The] response required includes resilient and diversified supply chains as well as reformed multilateralism," Mr. Jaishankar said, adding that "zero tolerance" for terrorism was a must.

The External Affairs Minister also called on Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirzi-

yoyev along with the other Ministers, where he was seated next to Mr. Bhutto at the round table.

He said India, which would take over the SCO Presidency next year, would "give the fullest support for the success of the Samarkand Summit", indicating Prime Minister Narendra Modi would attend the summit on September 15-16. If all the SCO leaders attend the summit in person, it will be the first time Mr. Modi will come face to face with Chinese President Xi Jinping, as well as Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Meeting SCO Secretary General, senior Chinese diplomat Zhang Ming, Mr. Jaishankar said India's Presidency next year would give SCO cooperation a "renewed thrust".