

# EAM bats for strong economic links among SCO countries

Time SCO adopted English as an official working language: Jaishankar

**BS REPORTER**

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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday urged the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states to forge “the widest possible economic links” to deal with the “uncertain” and volatile” global economic situation.

Jaishankar said India strongly supported the SCO’s reform-oriented agenda, and welcomed setting up of centres addressing challenges such as organised crime, drug trafficking, and cybersecurity. As it expands and becomes more diverse, the SCO must be more flexible and adaptable, Jaishankar said.

“To this end, the long-delayed decision to make English an official language of the SCO must be prioritised,” he said. The SCO currently uses Russian and Chinese as its official working languages.

In his address at the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in Moscow, Jaishankar said that since supply-side risks have been aggravated by demand-side complexities, there is “consequently an urgent requirement to de-risk and diversify”. “This is best done by as many of us forging the widest possible economic links,” Jaishankar said, stressing that this process should be fair, transparent and equitable. “India’s endeavours to conclude free-trade arrangements with many of you



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar addresses the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in Moscow on Tuesday

PHOTO:PTI

here are relevant,” he said. New Delhi is currently negotiating the India-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal was also in Moscow to review its progress.

In his speech, Jaishankar said it should not be forgotten that the SCO was founded to combat the three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

“These threats have become even more serious in the years that have passed. It is imperative that the world display zero tolerance towards terrorism in all its forms

and manifestations,” he said.

“There can be no justification, no looking away, and no whitewashing. As India has demonstrated, we have the right to defend our people against terrorism and will exercise it,” Jaishankar said.

On Monday, Jaishankar met his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, his sixth meeting with the Russian foreign minister this year.

He said their meeting is important as the two countries prepare for Russian President Vladimir Putin’s India visit for the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit.