
India's Jaishankar to visit Pakistan for SCO summit

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India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, is set to visit Pakistan to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) 'Heads of Government' (HoG) meeting on October 15-16 in Islamabad. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) confirmed the news during its weekly press briefing on Friday. Pakistan, holding the rotating chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, will host the in-person meeting of the regional bloc that includes India, China, Russia, Pakistan, and Central Asian nations. Jaishankar's visit comes after Pakistan extended an invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in August for the event. The SCO meeting is typically attended by heads of state or government, though India has been represented by senior ministers in recent years. Jaishankar himself participated in the 2022 meeting held in Bishkek. SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance, founded in 2001 by China,

Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It has since expanded to include India, Pakistan, and Iran as full members, with Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia as observers. On August 26, Pakistan sent a formal invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the summit meeting of the heads of state and government of the SCO, scheduled in the middle of October in Islamabad. This is the first time that Pakistan had invited the Indian leader in eight years. Last time Modi was invited for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in 2016. The summit never took place after India boycotted it and since then the regional organisation is all but dysfunctional. The then foreign minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had visited Goa for a meeting of the SCO foreign ministers in May 2023.