

'Weaponisation of everything...': Jaishankar flags change in world affairs amid Ukraine conflict

ANI | Nov 2, 2022, 11.13 PM IST



KOLKATA: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said the Ukraine conflict has dramatically widened the scope of political leveraging, in which trade, debt, and even tourism are being weaponized as the points of pressure.

Delivering a lecture at the IIM Calcutta, Jaishankar said there is a larger change today underway in international affairs that is very important to comprehend.

"This emanates from the weaponisation of everything. In recent years, we have already seen, how trade, connectivity, debt, resources and even tourism have become the point of political pressure. The Ukraine conflict has dramatically widened the scope of such leveraging," Jaishankar said on the topic of "India and the World".

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"The scale of measures, technology control, infrastructure and service restrictions and seizure of assets, has truly been breathtaking. At the same time, it is also a fact, that global rules and practices have been gamed for national advantage, in a manner that can no longer be overlooked," he added.

The minister said sharpening great power competition is inevitably creating stress factors across multiple domains. "At one level, it induces caution about international exposure but beyond a point that cannot be safeguarded because the very nature of existence is now globalized," he said.

The external affairs minister described the globalized era as a "double-edged world" and said it is hard to separate the vulnerabilities from the dependence or the risks from the benefits. "The very mobility that brought Covid to our homes was otherwise such an enormous source of livelihood for so many. The supply chains which created disruption when they did not function, were a boon when they did," he said.

Speaking on India's push on the digital front, Jaishankar said the last few years have also compelled us all to be digital.

"We, in India, have a record...that is generating respect across geographies. The scale of our digital delivery whether it is food, finance, health, pension or social benefits...the scale of it very much talks of the world," he said.

Jaishankar said that the world is moving "not just moving towards a different model of global interaction but also ones of greater national opportunities."

"In India, we know that, as Atamnibhar Bharat, there is no question now that foreign policy has deep personal implications for all of us because it impinges on so many aspects of our lives," he said.

He said concepts like "trusted providers" will gain ground in the coming days. "As before, foreign policy is the constant exercise of building power and exercising influence whether for national or collective efforts," he said.