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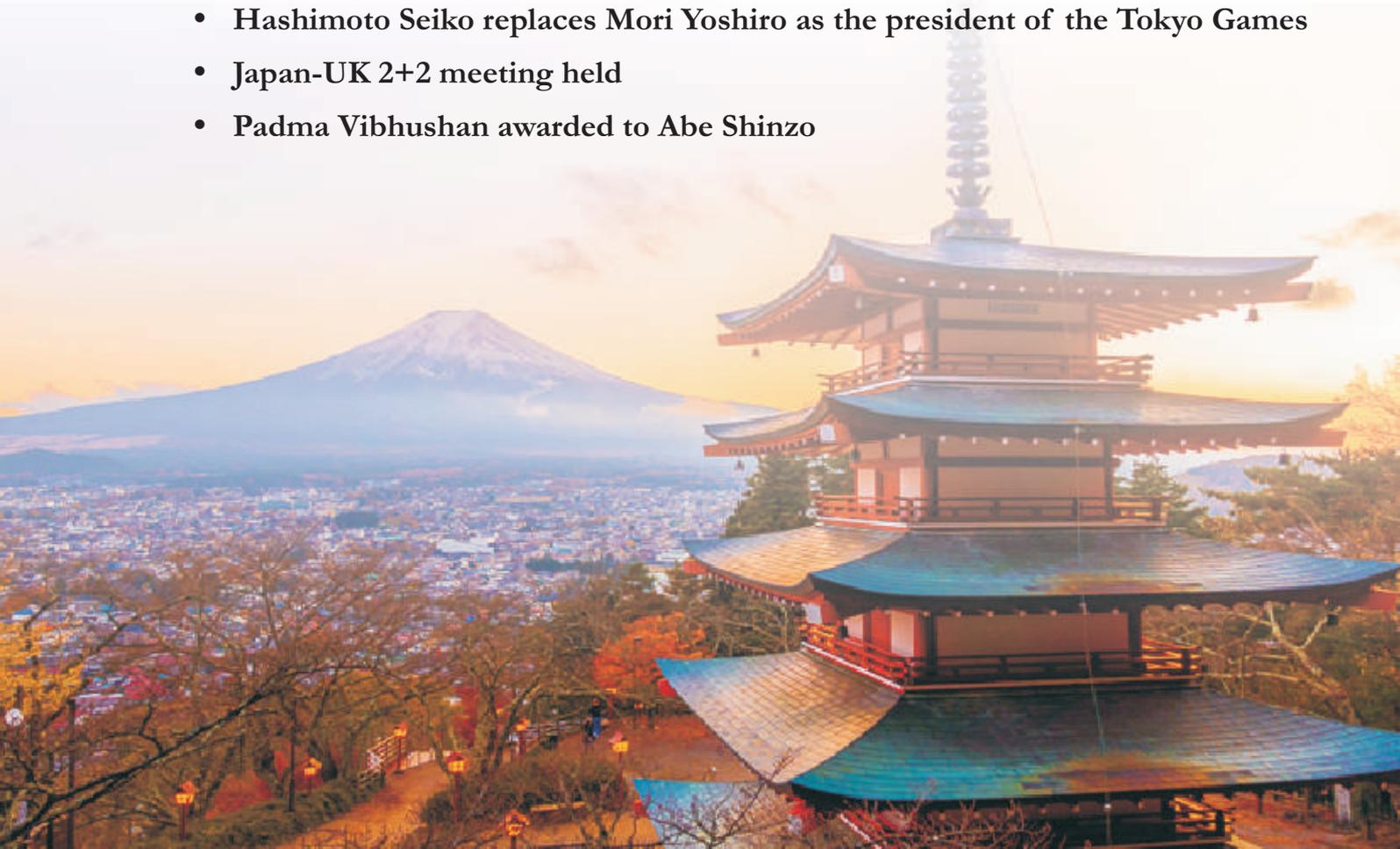
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

Digest

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India-Japan Act East with focus on Assam

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki visited Guwahati with the objective of advancing India-Japan cooperation in Northeast, especially realising the potential of Assam as the springboard in India's Act East policy. Dr. Jaishankar situated India-Japan strategic partnership at the centre of India's national modernization and economic development efforts. Japan has emerged as a key partner for India in navigating the opportunities that network of production, consumption, resources and markets in Asia presents. In this regard, regional connectivity and infrastructure is important to advance economic vitality, and Assam is the bridge between India and its Eastern neighbours.

The aim is to build robust connectivity to and within Assam, and extend it to rest of Northeast, and further strengthen the linkage with Myanmar and Bangladesh, and all the way to Vietnam and Japan. Assam is important in connecting the Himalayas with the Bay of Bengal via inland water connectivity to key ports like Chittagong and Mongla. Japanese ODA is pivotal in building the 20 km-long bridge on Brahmaputra between Dhubri (Assam) and Phulbari (Meghalaya). Tokyo has deepened its relations with Assam through several projects, including, prospects of building Japanese industrial township, capacity building in water supply, sewage treatment, disaster management, urban planning, agriculture and fisheries.

Sri Lanka offers the West Container Terminal

Sri Lanka's cabinet has confirmed that the West Container Terminal (WCT) at the Colombo port will be developed as a joint venture between the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA), India's Adani Group

and a Japanese company. The Private Public Partnership (PPP) will be on a 15-85 percent basis. This comes following Sri Lanka's earlier backtracking on the 2019 Memorandum of Understanding with India and Japan to develop the East Container Terminal (ECT). Japan has expressed regret over Colombo's unilateral decision on ECT while India has urged that all sides should continue to abide by existing understandings and commitments.

Quad Ministerial Meeting held

On February 18, the third India-Australia-Japan-US Quad Ministerial Meeting was held. External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar discussed regional security challenges and the need to uphold a rules-based international order, underpinned by respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, rule of law, freedom of navigation in the international seas and peaceful resolution of disputes with his counterparts Foreign Minister Marise Payne, Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Developing situation in Myanmar was also discussed. A key plank of the meeting was the mutuality of strategic interests in advancing a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific with ASEAN centrality at the core. Furthermore, Europe's greater involvement in the Indo-Pacific also featured in the discussions. Key areas of cooperation include enhancing access to affordable Covid-19 vaccines, maritime security, HADR, supply chain resilience and counter-terrorism.

Rewiring the cyber security strategy

Japan is reportedly working on strengthening its national cyber security strategy in 2021. In the wake of the pandemic, Tokyo is focussing on dealing

with new challenges posed by remote work and bolstering cyber security, especially in the healthcare and education sector. It prioritises building a robust 5G network based on a strong cyber security foundation.

China-Japan consultation on maritime affairs

On February 3, the 12th round of China-Japan consultations on maritime affairs was held virtually at the Director General level in the foreign ministry. During the meeting, both sides agreed to strengthen local cooperation within the framework of the China-Japan Maritime Search and Rescue Agreement, combat maritime crimes, and advance cooperation on marine environmental protection. This meeting was held on the heels of the new Chinese Coast Guard Law. Beijing has argued that enactment of the law is China's normal legislative activity, and is entirely in accordance with international law. Japan meanwhile is highly concerned and the National Security Council is discussing ways to strengthen Tokyo's defensive posture around the Senkaku Islands. Reports in Japanese media suggests that Chinese marine patrol vessels entered Japanese waters 14 times in February, more than twice the number in January.

Hashimoto Seiko replaces Mori Yoshiro as the president of the Tokyo Games

With just five months left for the Olympics, Mori Yoshiro was forced to step down as the president of the Tokyo Games organizing committee following the national outrage over his unsavoury remarks on women. He is replaced by Hashimoto Seiko, who earlier served as the Olympics Minister. She has also competed in Winter Games in speed skating and Summer Games in cycling. Mori's comments have stirred a national

conversation on gender equality. Hashimoto aims to raise the ratio of women in the organizing committee to 40 percent.

Japan-UK 2+2 meeting held

On February 3, the fourth Japan-UK 2+2 virtual meeting was held involving Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu and Defence Minister Kishi Nobuo and their UK counterparts, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and First Secretary of State Dominic Raab and Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace. As UK holds G7 Presidency in 2021, both sides agreed to bolster cooperation on setting post-COVID-19 new order and rules. In advancing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, they discussed the vitality of upholding the rules-based international order, and expressed reservation with regard to coercive and unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force. Demonstrating the UK's commitment to regional peace and security, 2021 will witness HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH and her Carrier Strike Group sail through the region including East Asia and there are prospects of joint exercises. Discussion on regional issues focussed on the East and South China Seas, implications of China's Coast Guard Law, situation in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Myanmar, the Middle East and illicit ship-to-ship transfers by North Korea-related vessels.

Padma Vibhushan awarded to Abe Shinzo

Former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo was awarded the Padma Vibhushan for his distinguished service in public affairs. He has been pivotal in advancing the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.