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Digest

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- **Quad meeting scheduled in Tokyo**

The second India-Australia-Japan-USA Ministerial Meeting is scheduled in Tokyo on October 6. External Affairs Minister, Dr. Jaishankar will visit Tokyo from 6-7 October and participate in the consultation with his counterparts including Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne. The upcoming meeting holds significance as the leaders meet in person in the backdrop of a pandemic, escalated regional security tensions and the upcoming US elections. The discussion will focus on post-pandemic global order and the need to strengthen mutual collaboration to realise the free and open Indo-Pacific. Additionally, Dr. Jaishankar will also engage in bilateral consultation with respective Foreign Ministers during the visit. The last ministerial meeting was hosted in New York on the side-lines of the United Nations General Assembly in 2019.

- **Foreign Minister Wang Yi may visit Japan in October**

Media reports suggest that Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi is expected to visit Japan in October to meet Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide and Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu. The meeting is likely to be after Tokyo hosts the Quad foreign ministers meeting scheduled on October 6. If this meeting materialises then this would be the first high-level visit since Yang Jiechi's visit to Japan in February when both countries were making arrangements for President Xi Jinping's state visit to Japan, which got postponed following the outbreak of the pandemic.

- **India-Japan strengthens security cooperation with ACSA**

On September 9, India and Japan signed the Agreement Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services, otherwise known as the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement. This Agreement is aimed at facilitating smooth provision of supplies and services between the two forces. The objective is reciprocal use of logistics facilities in the course of visits to each other's ports and bases. This may allow access to the Japanese base in Djibouti, and the Japanese may access facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

These kind of agreements ease administrative preparations and help replenishment of fuel, rations, spares (where required), and berthing and maintenance for ships and aircraft during regular port calls, joint exercises and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations. It helps in book-keeping and using standing logistics network. This Agreement will be in force for a period of 10 years, and shall thereafter be automatically extended for successive periods of ten years each, unless either Party notifies the other of its intention in writing to terminate this Agreement at least six months before the end of each period of ten years. India-Japan agreement encompasses supplies and services related to the following categories: food; water; billeting; transportation (including airlift); petroleum, oils; clothing; communications services; medical services; base operations support (including construction incident to base operations support); storage services; use of facilities; training services; spare parts and components; repair and maintenance services (including calibration services); and airport and seaport services.

- **India-Japan maritime exercise held**

India-Japan biennial maritime exercise (JIMEX) was held in North Arabian Sea from 26-28 September. This is the fourth edition. In 2018, JIMEX was conducted off Visakhapatnam. The objective is to develop high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills by conducting advanced exercises across the spectrum of maritime operations. This year the focus was on

tactical exercises involving weapon firings, cross deck helicopter operations and complex surface, anti-submarine and air warfare drills. JIMEX 20 was conducted in a “non-contact at-sea-only format” given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

- **India-Japan Summit**

On September 10, India-Japan meeting was held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Abe Shinzo. This was the last official prime ministerial level exchange before Abe's departure from the office. Both leaders have invested enormous political capital in forging this Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Both nations have been guided by the principles of rule of law and freedom of navigation and overflight while pursuing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. Shared values and convergence of strategic goals add depth to this relation. Japan has emerged as an important partner in India's Act East policy. It also performs an active role in empowering India's economic modernisation since Japan is not just a prominent source of ODA but also FDI. In addition to flagship projects in economic hubs, Japan is also engaged in the strategic peripheries such as the Northeast and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. As Prime Minister Suga assumes office, India is poised to further accelerate the momentum set in the bilateral relations.

- **Prime Minister Suga takes charge**

Suga Yoshihide became the Prime Minister of Japan on September 16 following Abe Shinzo's resignation owing to health corners. Suga has served as the Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Abe administration since 2012, and is considered as the indispensable architect behind the political stability during Abe's historic tenure as the longest serving prime minister. Reviving the economy while fighting the Covid-19 pandemic will be his priority. Criticising bureaucratic sectionalism, he has emphasised on regulatory reform and digitalization of the economy. He is expected to carry forward the policy direction of the Abe administration and advance Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. As regional security situation aggravates, he expressed his intentions to further bolster US-Japan alliance, and revise the Constitution along the lines of proposals made by the Liberal Democratic Party.

- **Defence ministry request US\$52 billion budget**

Japanese Defence Ministry has requested US\$52 billion budget for the year beginning from April 2021. It implies almost 8.3 percent budget increase. Defence ministry is expected to confirm the precise amount before the 2021 budget is made in December. The budget request prioritises space-related programmes including designing a surveillance satellite, and cybersecurity, especially building a cyber defence unit within the Self-Defense Forces. The ministry has requested around US\$256 million for fighting the coronavirus.

- **Japan-UK trade agreement**

An economic partnership agreement is reached between Japan and the UK following UK's exit from the European Union. They decided to accept most of the preferential tariffs of the Japan-EU EPA. It is reported that tariffs on railway cars, and auto parts exported from Japan will be eliminated once the agreement enters into force in 2021.