



PM Modi, Shinzo Abe summit could kick off defence logistic support pact/NDTV

PM Modi's Japan visit later this month is the step forward towards the Act East Policy articulated by him and described Japan as a "Cornerstone". This crucial visit will come close at the time when Shinjo Abe to return from his visit to China-the first bilateral visit by a PM of Japan to China in the last seven years.

Before discussing the importance of PM Modi's visit to Tokyo and both countries' mutual interests, it's necessary to evaluate Abe's visit to China.

Despite strong business ties between both countries, there is continuously a deep freeze in bilateral relations since 2012. Bilateral ties derailed in 2012 after Japan nationalized a group of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea claimed by Beijing, this led to the massive violent protests in China. Many Chinese resent Japan over its invasion of their country.

Abe's October 25-27 visit follows a trip to Japan by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, the ruling communist party's second-ranking official in May.

Both countries hope to step up cooperation in all areas and elevate bilateral ties despite the deepening concerns over the South China Sea, China's aggressive approach in Indo-Pacific and equally on past invasion of Japan over China's so-called territory. So, more precisely, Abe's visit further to strengthen the economic ties between both the countries with parallel to no consensus on permanent concerns.

Modi's visit, on the other hand, will signal the manner in which New Delhi-Tokyo relation have been going hand in hand to its higher level.

Both India and Japan have been concerned about China's growing maritime power in the Indo-Pacific region and its aggressive approach, particularly in the South China Sea. Both are members of Quad to balance the maritime power and, hence, to secure the Indo-Pacific region along with U.S. and Australia. Both sides have consensus on the issue that Quad is not the only mechanism to achieve the common goals in the Indo-Pacific. As mentioned by the Japanese ambassador to India, Mr Kenji Hiramatsu in New Delhi "Along with the Quad,

Trilateral may be another mechanism to the fair regulation of international law of the sea in particular region and the centrality of ASEAN also is equally important.”

During the visit of PM Modi to Tokyo from October 28-29, China will be the elephant in the centre of discussion along with many economic ties. The two sides will be hoping to ink a pact on maritime domain awareness since it had been emphasized in the joint statement during PM Abe's official visit to New Delhi in September last year with acknowledging the importance of bilateral cooperation in maritime security by strengthening and enhancing maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific region.

Despite maritime security in Indo-Pacific, both countries will discuss and ink pacts on many issues like Infrastructure, Technology transfer, Artificial Intelligence, Space missions, Military exercises, Disaster management, etc.

Big emphasize on the development of India's Northeast through its “Act East Forum”. In addition to existing projects in Meghalaya and Mizoram, plan to construct a road from the Assam-Bhutan border to Meghalaya-Bangladesh border will be on the table of the discussion.

Japan and India to hold their first bilateral ground force exercises in Mizoram in November that will be focused on urban warfare and counter-terrorism. Japan also to be an observer at the India-U.S., Cope India Air force exercises for the first time in December.

To ensure the mutual logistics support, formal negotiation towards an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) will begin in this Modi-Abe's meeting. Joint research on unmanned vehicles and robotics may mark the first joint military R&D efforts between India and Japan.

Hence, PM Modi's meeting with his counterpart in Tokyo will be mutually beneficial for both countries and also for the security of the Indo-Pacific region. India's position on the Indo-Pacific, as articulated by PM Modi, is very much in line with Japan's view. Optimistically, this visit to be a milestone of the Act East Policy, envisioned by PM Modi and described Japan as a “cornerstone” of the Act East policy.

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