



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

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February 2020

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- **Japan and COVID-19**

Japan has registered over a thousand cases of COVID-19 including the infected patients from the cruise ship. Hokkaido, the most affected prefecture, has declared emergency. Other affected prefectures include Aichi, Tokyo, Kanagawa and Chiba. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo requested elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, special needs schools to close temporarily to avert spreading of group infection. But this may have an impact on the micro, small and medium businesses due to the shortage of workers as parents will have to take leave. The government is extending support through the Employment Adjustment Subsidies irrespective of industry. It has launched emergency packages drawn from contingency funds to fight the outbreak. There are reports suggesting that Japan is considering clinical trial of anti-flu Avigan to observe if it is effective on coronavirus. Economic impact of COVID-19, following drop in foreign tourists and disruption in production lines, are creating concerns.

- **COVID-19 and Olympic Games**

Japan is scheduled to host the Olympic Games from July 24-August 9, 2020. The Paralympics is scheduled from August 25, 2020. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, there is speculation regarding a possible postponement of the Games. But the International Olympic Committee has stressed that the Games will happen as scheduled. The World Health Organization is working closely with the organisers and offering risk assessment and management counsel. Earlier, Olympics happened during Zika and SARS outbreaks.

- **The US-Japan Revised Logistics Interoperability Framework**

On February 5, the US and Japan signed a revised Logistics Interoperability Framework with the goal of advancing alliance co-operation in support of mutual concerns including humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and other peacetime operations. This Framework facilitates a strategic approach to integrated logistics and intends to effectively deploy available resources and ease obstacles while delivering operational requirements. The Interoperability Framework furthers cooperation in all areas of logistics planning, including tactical, operational, innovative and strategic approaches. Furthermore, both sides will explore possibilities of improving radiological screening procedures, and integrating emerging technologies for example additive manufacturing and unmanned systems that can improve lethality and sustainability.

- **China-Japan Political Dialogue and President Xi Jinping's Visit to Japan**

The 8th China-Japan High-level Political Dialogue was held in Tokyo in February. Yang Jiechi, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, and Shigeru Kitamura, Secretary General of Japan's National Security Council discussed the prospects of President Xi Jinping's scheduled visit to Japan in April. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19, the state visit is deferred until fall after Tokyo hosts the Olympics and Paralympics. This will be the first visit by a Chinese president since 2008. Presently, both China and Japan are preoccupied with containing the COVID-19 outbreak and agreed to share information and experience in epidemic prevention. During this visit, Director Yang Jiechi also met Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.

- **Foreign Minister Motegi Attends Munich Security Conference**

In February, Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu attended the Munich Security Conference. During the discussions, he stressed the significance of promoting the Free and Open Indo-Pacific and pushed for advancing physical connectivity through quality infrastructure development; people-to-people connectivity through education; and enhancing institutional connectivity through economic partnership agreements (EPAs). On the side-lines, Minister Motegi also

participated at the Japan-US-South Korea, Japan-South Korea, Japan-Iran and Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

- **Cabinet Approves 5G Bill**

On February 18, Cabinet approved a bill intended to support the development of secured 5G mobile networks and drone technologies. The bill facilitates companies that invest in 5G with 15 percent tax break with the objective of enhancing the capabilities of Japanese firms. It will require companies to undertake security measures against hacking and data leaks. The bill also supports drone manufacturers. Chinese companies enjoy 70 percent share of the international drone market. Japan barred Huawei Technologies and ZTE Corp. from getting involved in public procurement contracts as apprehensions regarding alleged espionage intensified.

- **Cyber-attack on NEC**

Major Japanese firms Mitsubishi Electric and NEC have been targeted by hackers. Recent reports suggested that NEC Corp. may have been subjected to cyberattacks by hackers through 2018. Thousands of data files including the ones related to business with the defence ministry may have been compromised. Personal computers and servers at the company headquarters, which may have confidential data about technical proposals, were targeted.

- **Cabinet Approval Rating**

Kyodo News February survey indicated that the approval rating for Prime Minister Abe's Cabinet has dropped to 41.0 percent, down 8.3 points from the January poll in the middle of continuing political scandals. Meanwhile, a Jiji poll in February on post-Abe candidates for Prime Minister suggested that Ishiba Shigeru has support from 21.6 percent; Koizumi Shinjiro has support from 15.1 percent; Abe has support from 10.6 percent; Suga Yoshihide has support from 6.1 percent; Kishida Fumio has support from 5.2 percent; Kono Taro has support from 4.5 percent; and Motegi Toshimitsu has support from 1.5 percent.

- **Japan may Upgrade its Hyper Velocity Gliding Projectiles**

Mainichi Shimbun has reported in February that Japan is weighing the option of upgrading its hyper velocity gliding projectiles (HVGP), to be deployed in 2026 to defend the Nansei Islands. This will reportedly happen in two phases. First, an early equipment type will be developed for likely deployment by the Ground Self-Defence Force (GSDF) and second, an upgraded type will be developed for likely installation in 2028. Besides, Japan is reportedly contemplating advancing anti-ship and anti-surface missiles.

- **Japan-Vietnam Security Relations**

In February, a defense consultation meeting between Vietnam's deputy defense minister, Nguyen Chi Vinh and his Japanese counterpart Nishida Yasunori was hosted in Tokyo. The focus was on stepping up cooperation with regard to UN peacekeeping, cyber security, and search and rescue operations. In addition, Vietnam and Japan co-chaired the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) workshop on International Cooperation on Maritime Domain Awareness in February, where the focus remained on challenges such as piracy and maritime terrorism. Vietnam is the ASEAN chair for 2020 and also the non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.