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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

Digest

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- **Japan to build two Aegis-equipped guided-missile destroyers**

Defence Ministry has confirmed that Japan will build two new Aegis-equipped guided-missile destroyers as an alternative to the scrapped Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defence system following ballooning cost and protests from local host site. The decision is made following an interim report that getting additional Aegis-equipped destroyers is the most feasible of all three choices based on capabilities and manoeuvrability. Japan was considering using big private-sector merchant vessels as BMD platforms or constructing offshore structures to host the systems. Meanwhile, Japan has approved a defence budget of \$51.7 billion for fiscal 2021, up 1.1 percent from the previous year.

- **Armitage-Nye report recommends participation of Japan in the Five Eyes**

The Armitage-Nye report published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has suggested that efforts must be made to incorporate Japan in the Five Eyes information-sharing network. Currently the Five Eyes include the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Japan is continuously firming up cooperation on information sharing with these governments, especially the US and the UK. The report also talks about the bipartisan consensus in Washington on the significance of the US-Japan alliance.

- **Sri Lanka to suspend two infrastructure projects**

Reports suggest that Sri Lanka intends to terminate two important projects funded by Japan including the development of Eastern Container Terminal (ECT) and the Light Railway Track (LRT) project. This decision is aimed at ending overseas loans and favouring investment-led public-private partnership. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) extended a soft-loan of \$ 1.86 billion for the LRT project. Also, Japan has committed a \$500 million loan for the ECT. ECT project is a three-way undertaking, including Sri Lanka, India and Japan. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in May 2019. Sri Lanka wants Japan as investor, not creditor.

- **India-Japan Defence Ministers meeting**

On December 22, Indian Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh held a telephonic meeting with his Japanese counterpart Kishi Nobuo. They decided to work together to counter disinformation following the COVID-19 outbreak. They also agreed to share lessons in humanitarian aid and disaster response operations during COVID-19, and further explore new opportunities in third country cooperation with the intention of making them more resilient to the pandemic.

Both leaders confirmed that India and Japan would continue to strongly promote defence cooperation aimed at reinforcing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. They shared views concerning regional security situations, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Japanese defence ministry indicated that both sides “concurred in sending a clear message that they strongly oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion or any activities that escalate tension”.

- **US-Japan-France Joint Military Drill**

Reports in Japanese media suggests that the US, Japan and France is likely to hold a joint military drill in May 2021. The drill is aimed at demonstrating trilateral cooperation in ensuring freedom of passage in the Indo-Pacific. The focus of the drill will reportedly be on offering relief during natural disasters.

- **Japan keen on augmenting defence cooperation with Germany in the Indo-Pacific**

Japan and Germany are also stepping up defence cooperation and during a virtual meeting between Defence Minister Kishi and his German counterpart Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Japan expressed strong support for Germany's plan to bolster its maritime presence by sending ships in the Indo-Pacific. Japan also expressed optimism that Germany would participate in joint exercises with the Self-Defence Forces in 2021.

- **Quad senior officials meeting held**

On December 18, senior officials from India-Australia-Japan-US held virtual consultation on issues of mutual strategic interest including connectivity and infrastructure development, and security issues, including counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security, humanitarian and disaster relief. They also exchanged views on the significance of augmenting resilience of supply chains for an expeditious global economic recovery. Each Quad member state has reiterated its commitment towards a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region built on shared values and principles of international law, particularly UNCLOS. Lauding Vietnam's ASEAN chairmanship, the Quad members reiterated their steady support for ASEAN-centrality and an ASEAN-led framework in the Indo-Pacific.

- **Sixth Indo-Japan SAMVAD Conference**

At the Sixth Indo-Japan SAMVAD Conference on December 21, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the significance of deepening bilateral dialogue on the shared values of democracy, humanism, ahimsa, and ideals of Lord Buddha. Prime Minister Modi proposed the creation of a library focussed on traditional Buddhist literature and scriptures. The aim is to gather digital copies of Buddhist literature from various countries, translate them and make them freely accessible for scholars of Buddhism. The research focus will be on investigating how Buddha's teachings can guide humanity through existing challenges.

- **Japan and COVID-19 vaccine**

Prime Minister Suga has confirmed that Japan will start administering Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine by late February 2021. Japanese media reports indicate that medical workers will top the priority list followed by elderly citizens. Subsequently, from April, the general population will get the vaccine. Japan aims to secure enough vaccine for its total population by mid-2021.