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Digest

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US-Japan 2+2 meeting focusses on China

The US-Japan 2+2 Security Consultative Committee meeting was held in Tokyo on March 16. The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin along with their Japanese counterparts foreign minister, Motegi Toshimitsu and defence minister, Kishi Nobuo focussed on aligning security policy, deepening cooperation across all domains, and working together on operational readiness and deterrent posture in order to deal with regional security challenges. Mapping the China threat, the discussion stressed on key issues such as stability in the Taiwan Strait, regional implications of Chinese Coast Guard law, developments in the South and East China Seas, and human rights situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Both sides underscored that China's conduct remains "inconsistent with the existing international order, and presents political, economic, military, and technological challenges to the alliance". Prime Minister Suga is scheduled to have a summit meeting with President Biden in Washington on April 16.

Chinese foreign ministry has pushed back arguing in favour of the UN-centred international order, and emphasised that Washington and Tokyo "are not entitled to define what the international order is." It has further accused Japan of being a "strategic vassal of the US", guided by the objective of restricting China's rise.

State Secretary Blinken and Defence Secretary Austin then proceeded to Seoul for the US-ROK Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting held on March 18. These high-level visit to East Asia came on the heels of the Quad leaders' summit, and in the run up to the US-China meeting in Anchorage. The primary message that

emerged from the discussions in Tokyo and Seoul reaffirmed Washington's determination to strengthen alliances in its pursuit of advancing peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Strengthening network of precision-strike missiles along first island chain

The US is reportedly looking at setting up precision-strike networks west of the International Date Line along the first island chain, and integrated air missile defence in the second island chain. Admiral Philip Davidson has said before the Senate Armed Services Committee on US Indo-Pacific Command Posture that the greatest danger lies in "the erosion of conventional deterrence. A combat-credible, conventional deterrent posture is necessary to prevent conflict, protect U.S. interests, and to assure our allies and partners". The US Indo-Pacific Command is seeking \$27.4 billion between 2022 and 2027 following Chinese activity surrounding Taiwan and the East and South China Seas.

EW unit at Camp Kengun

The Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) has set up an electronic warfare (EW) unit, called the 301st Electronic Warfare Company, at Camp Kengun, situated in Kumamoto prefecture. The aim is to improve the ability to defend the southern remote islands. The unit has 80 personnel and operates the Network Electronic Warfare System (NEWS). The focus is on electronic reconnaissance, and dent the command, control, and communication (C3) networks of rivals, identify adversary's naval and airborne communication and radar emissions, and jam enemy radars.

Cabinet approves bill to regulate land deals

Following national security concerns, the Cabinet has approved a bill to regulate land deals and create “watch zones” around SDF facilities, US bases, and nuclear plants. This is aimed at impeding espionage. The government will have the authority to probe the nationality of owners and how the land is being utilised. In case of suspicious activities, the bill enables the government to issue orders to halt the same, and noncompliance will lead to imprisonment for up to two years or a fine of \$18,200. The bill is expected to pass in the current Diet session and come into effect in April 2022.

Three working groups set up by the Quad leaders

The first Quad leaders’ virtual summit has led to setting up of three expert working groups on key themes of vaccine partnership, critical and emerging technologies, and climate change. The aim of the Quad vaccine experts group is to combine each of the four nations’ medical, scientific, financing, manufacturing and delivery capabilities for safe and effective vaccine distribution. The critical and emerging technology working group will work to facilitate cooperation on international standards and innovative technologies of the future. The climate working group will advance discussions on mitigation, adaptation, resilience, technology, capacity-building, and climate finance.

RCEP likely to increase Japan’s GDP by 2.7 percent

Japanese government estimates indicate that RCEP will increase Japan’s GDP by 2.7 percent and create nearly 570,000 jobs. The mega free trade agreement will reportedly

cover about 46 percent of Japan’s total trade, compared to 15 percent vis-a-vis the CPTPP and approximately 12 percent vis-a-vis the Japan-EU EPA. The estimated GDP increase would be bigger compared to the assessed increase of approximately 1.5 percent from CPTPP.

Japanese grant aid to advance sustainable economic growth in South Andaman

India and Japan exchanged notes concerning provision of yen loans for several projects including the Bengaluru Metro Rail Project (Phase 2) and Delhi Mass Rapid Transport System Project (Phase 4), and grant aid for Improvement of Power Supply in South Andaman. The grant aid will provide batteries in order to stabilize electricity supply, and support effective utilization of electricity generated by solar PV. This is aimed at advancing sustainable economic growth, and mitigation of climate change in South Andaman.

Japan-Indonesia 2+2 meeting held

Japan-Indonesia 2+2 defence and foreign ministers meeting was held in Tokyo. Adding more depth to the strategic partnership, both sides have signed a deal on promoting the transfer of defence equipment and technology. One area of export could be technology for escort vessels.

Japan and Germany strengthen security cooperation

Japan and Germany signed an Agreement on Security of Information which enables exchange of confidential information and intensify cooperation on security policy and military technology. Furthermore, they agreed to bolster cooperation in cyber security, space and electromagnetism.