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JAPAN

Digest

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- **Australia-India-Japan Supply Chain Initiative**

On September 1, Australia-India-Japan virtual meeting involving India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Simon Birmingham, and Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Kajiyama Hiroshi was held. The aim was to discuss Australia-India-Japan Supply Chain Resilience Initiative. The objective is to develop trustworthy, dependable and reliable supply chain in the Indo-Pacific and advance a free, fair, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, and stable trade and investment environment. There is an urgent need for regional cooperation to diversify and build secure supply chains in the post COVID scenario, and as such the ministers urged other countries sharing common values and interests to participate in the initiative. It is important to create capacities, manage risks including easing price volatility and improve competitiveness of sectors.

- **Japan-ASEAN supply chain**

Japan is expanding the government subsidy programme in order to diversify supply chains following the pandemic. It has reserved around US\$221 million for Japanese companies that are willing to shift production from China back to Japan or to Southeast Asian economies. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is focussing on projects that support building resilience in the Japan-ASEAN supply chain. Additionally, reports in the media suggested that Japanese manufacturers are qualified for government subsidies in case they consider shifting production away from China to Bangladesh and India. The subsidies will help in carrying out feasibility studies and pilot programmes. The first round of subsidy is supporting 57 companies to relocate manufacturing to Japan and another 30 companies to move to Southeast Asia.

- **Japan and the Five Eyes**

Japan has expressed interest in joining the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance which includes the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Defense Minister Kono Taro has reportedly said that joining the alliance would allow Japan to obtain crucial classified intelligence. The current Five Eyes arrangement has its roots in the signals intelligence cooperation between the US and UK. Japan, a key American ally with strong domestic intelligence gathering capability, is often weighed as a potential member for expansion. Meanwhile, the Five Eyes have increased cooperation with like-minded countries, such as Germany and Japan but it has refrained from officially including Japan into this restricted classified information sharing group.

- **Japan to bolster defence industrial base**

Defence Ministry is reportedly conducting internal reviews in order to strengthen defence industrial base and improve policies pertaining to contracting, supply chains, imports, and global sales and collaboration. One priority area is augmenting domestic industry's role in offering maintenance, repair, overhaul, and upgrade for imported military platforms such as Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter and the Bell-Boeing V-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft. Also, the focus is on streamlining defence contracting, aimed at creating a competitive environment within the industrial base. Furthermore, with regard to risk management in supply chains, the ministry is conducting a survey of major equipment.

- **Japan to establish a new electronic warfare unit to jam radars**

Japan is reportedly planning to establish a new electronic warfare unit at Kumamoto's Camp Kengun to jam radars. In case of an attack on remote islands, this unit is expected to find electromagnetic wavelengths used by the adversary for communication and then interrupt enemy signals. This new unit will reportedly coordinate with the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade based in Nagasaki's Camp Ainoura and focus on recapturing islands. As many as 80 personnel will be part of this new unit and they will get training in electromagnetic warfare at the Signal School in Kanagawa.

- **Japan's outreach to Southeast Asia**

Foreign Minister Motegi was on a Southeast Asia tour in August. He visited Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea. The primary objective was to discuss the developments in South China Sea and further garner support for Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision. He also assured Japan's assistance regarding the coronavirus pandemic, and deliberated on easing travel restrictions. In a related development, Japan expressed strong protest against Chinese ballistic missiles launched in the South China Sea. Motegi argued that Japan strongly opposes any actions that raise tensions in the South China Sea since it is directly related to regional peace and stability. Tokyo has consistently argued in favour of upholding the rule of law in the seas and peaceful resolution of disputes based on international law.

- **Prime Minister Abe Shinzo resigned**

On August 28, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo announced his resignation owing to health concerns arising from ulcerative colitis. He assumed office in December 2012 and served for seven years and eight months during which he succeeded in putting Japan back on the international strategic map by steering important policies in the domains of national security, foreign policy and economics. He played an important role in shaping Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. However, he expressed "greatest regret" for not being able to resolve the abductions issue with North Korea, conclude a peace treaty with Russia, and amend the post-war constitution.

- **India-Japan Cooperation in fighting COVID-19**

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has signed an ODA agreement with India, providing around ¥50 billion for COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support on August 31. The aim is to support India's fight against the pandemic and alleviate COVID-19's adverse socioeconomic impacts by employing emergency response programmes in the health sector. This will help India in realising the Sustainable Development Goals.