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JAPAN

Digest

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- **Japan suspends Aegis Ashore deployment**

Japan has decided to suspend the deployment of Aegis Ashore land-based missile defence system and the Defence Ministry and the National Security Council (NSC) are reportedly exploring options. The authorities have cited technical issues and cost related challenges behind such a pronouncement. The NSC is likely to make an official declaration of withdrawing the plan to deploy Aegis Ashore in Akita and Yamaguchi prefectures in the near future. Subsequently, Japan may have to revisit the current National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and Medium-Term Defense Program (MTDP) of 2018. Japan's decision to halt the deployment of Aegis Ashore missile defence system may wane its ability to manage the North Korean challenge and may also impact the US-Japan security alliance.

- **Chinese submarine spotted in Japan's contiguous waters**

Defence authorities indicated that a Chinese submarine sailed without surfacing in the contiguous zone northeast of Amami-Oshima Island in Kagoshima prefecture. It was spotted by Maritime Self-Defense Force (SDF) destroyers and patrol planes. The Chinese submarine reportedly sailed west through the East China Sea. Japanese authorities confirmed that the submarine refrained from entering Japan's territorial waters. Defence administration is gathering information and strengthening surveillance. This is the first instance since 2018 when Chinese nuclear-powered submarine was detected around the Miyako Island.

- **China warns Japan on deploying US intermediate-range missiles**

Chinese defence ministry has warned that it would undertake every necessary countermeasures in case Japan departs from its defence-oriented policy and agrees to host US intermediate-range missiles. Beijing stressed that "Japan and other countries concerned can act cautiously with the big picture of regional peace and stability in mind, and should not allow the US to deploy medium-range missiles on their territories, so as not to fall victim to Washington's geopolitical ploys". It has called upon Japan to sincerely draw lessons from history and uphold an exclusively defence-oriented posture.

- **Ishigaki municipal assembly alters area designation of Senkaku**

The Ishigaki municipal assembly in Okinawa has given a new name to the administrative area that comprises the contested Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. These disputed Islands come under the jurisdiction of Ishigaki city. Presently, Tonoshiro is the administrative title for the Islands and starting October, it will be transformed to Tonoshiro Senkaku. The authorities explained that the change is done to escape errors in administrative work since one more place in Ishigaki city is also called Tonoshiro. This has sparked strong response from China and Taiwan, who also claim these disputed Islands. Subsequently, Chinese Ministry of Natural Resources also named underwater geological features in the East China Sea.

- **US-Japan Exercise in South China Sea**

Navies of the US and Japan sailed through the South China Sea on June 23 during a bilateral exercise. From the US side, USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) and from the Japanese side, Kashima class-training vessel JS Kashima (TV-3508) and Shimayuki-class training vessel JS Shimayuki (TV-3513) took part in the exercise. The objective is to strengthen interoperability between the allies and to highlight the significance of communications and coordination. Previously in April, Gabrielle Giffords sailed together with Akizuki-class destroyer JS Teruzuki (DD 116) in the Andaman Sea to uphold free and open sea-lanes in the Indo-Pacific. There the focus was on communications exercises.

- **Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement**

Following six years of negotiations, Japan and Australia have finalised the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). The RAA will need ratification in the Diet. Reports suggest that it is expected to be signed at the Japan-Australia summit scheduled for July. The agreement encompasses provisions

necessary for the SDFs to operate in Australia, and for the Australian defence forces to operate around Japan. The mutuality of the RAA is important and it reportedly encompasses taxation, basing, entry and exit procedures, and criminal jurisdiction. The objective remains to augment bilateral partnership towards a free and open Indo-Pacific.

- **G-7 expresses “grave concern” over Hong Kong**

The Foreign Ministers of Japan, the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the High Representative of the EU highlighted “grave concern regarding China’s decision to impose a national security law on Hong Kong”. They stressed that “China’s decision is not in conformity with the Hong Kong Basic Law and its international commitments under the principles of the legally binding, UN-registered Sino-British Joint Declaration. The proposed national security law would risk seriously undermining the “One Country, Two Systems” principle and the territory’s high degree of autonomy”. Furthermore, it was stated that it “would jeopardize the system which has allowed Hong Kong to flourish and made it a success over many years”. Leaders encouraged free debate amongst the stakeholders. Concerns over the sustainability of fundamental rights, rule of law and independent justice system were flagged.

- **President Xi Jinping's state visit to Japan doubtful**

Reports in the Japanese media indicated that Japan may no longer continue preparation for a postponed state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2020. This is in the backdrop of rising domestic reservations following developments in Hong Kong. The state visit was initially scheduled in April which got postponed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. There were discussions about a possible date after November. But with growing US-China tensions, Chinese maneuvers in Hong Kong and developments in the East China Sea, there are some reservations cropping up within the political class. For instance, two panels of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) gave a resolution to Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yoshihide Suga, voicing “serious concern” over recent developments and urging to reconsider if such a state visit should be held.

- **NTT, NEC collaborate on 5G network infrastructure and equipment**

Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT) is collaborating with NEC Corp. to advance 5G technology. NTT plans to take 5 percent stake in NEC for US\$560 million. Reports suggest that they are planning joint development of 5G network infrastructure and equipment, as well as base stations. Japanese companies are gearing up for the 5G race, which is now dominated by Huawei, Ericsson, Nokia and others. Thus NTT and NEC joined forces to expand their footprint in the global market.

- **India-Japan strengthen maritime cooperation**

On June 27, India and Japan conducted a joint exercise in the Indian Ocean with the objective of promoting mutual understanding and strengthening communication. The exercise involved four ships including JS Kashima (IV 3508) and JS Shimayuki (IV 3513) from the Japanese side and INS Rana and INS Kulish from the Indian side. This exercise demonstrates India-Japan resolve to maintain strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific at a time when Chinese maritime assertiveness is on the rise both in South and East China Seas.

- **India-Japan Moon Mission advances**

Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency shared details about the India-Japan Joint Lunar Polar Exploration (LPE) mission which intends to put a lander and rover on the moon. Japanese side will be making the landing module and the rover whereas India would develop the lander system. This mission is expected to be launched after 2023.