



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

Digest

November 2024

- India-Japan defence ministers meet in Laos
- Japan-China security advisers meet in Beijing
- US to deploy missile units in Okinawa
- PM Ishiba survives confirmation as head of minority government



India-Japan defence ministers meet in Laos

India's Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh, on a visit to Vientiane, Laos to attend the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus), [met](#) with his Japanese counterpart Gen Nakatani on the sidelines of that event on 22 November. The two sides had a brief discussion on the current state of defence relations, and reiterated the importance of technological cooperation between the two countries in the field of defence technology. In that context, the two sides welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the delivery of Japan-manufactured UNICORN radar masts to the Indian Navy, and agreed to enhance co-production and co-development.

Another highlight of the meeting was the announcement that the two ministers had discussed the negotiation of a Reciprocal Provision of Supply and Services Agreement between the Indian and Japanese armed forces. This agreement is the only foundational military cooperation agreement left to be signed, after agreements governing reciprocal access to supplies and services, information sharing and technology transfer were signed in 2020 and 2015 respectively. The ministers also discussed their continued participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises, while also agreeing to explore further cooperation in the air domain.

Japan's NSA meets China FM in Beijing

Japan's National Security Adviser Takeo Akiba [met](#) China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi for 'marathon' talks in Beijing on 4 November. Their meeting was to lay the groundwork for the first meeting between

newly-reelected Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and President Xi Jinping in Chile on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. The talks, which lasted four and a half hours, saw the principals agree to maintain 'strategic and mutually beneficial ties' and a 'constructive and stable relationship'.

Wang is said to have urged Japan to take actions to reassure China that it considers the two as 'cooperative partners' that 'do not pose a threat to each other'. He also refuted Japan's concerns over airspace violations by Chinese military aircraft, while agreeing that the development of the two countries is 'closely linked and highly complementary', thus obviating the necessity of decoupling. For his part, Akiba said he had conveyed Japan's position on the resumption of seafood exports to China after a ban on them was imposed in 2023 as well as securing the safety of Japanese nationals after consecutive attacks. He also stated that he had shared Japan's concerns regarding the Korean peninsula and deepening cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow.

US to deploy missile units in Okinawa

On 25 November Kyodo News cited 'sources familiar with Japan-US relations' to [reveal](#) that the United States military plans to deploy the US Marine Corps' elite Marine Littoral Regiment to temporary bases around the *Nansei Shoto* (the set of southwestern islands including Okinawa) and the Philippines. The unit will come equipped with the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), which has seen deployment most recently in Ukraine. The US Army will also deploy its elite unit, Multi-Domain Task Force, to the islands.

The MDTF is envisaged as an all-weather, all-terrain fighting force that explicitly accounts for the space and cyber domains in its operations. The sources told Kyodo News that these deployments were part of a joint Japan-US contingency plan to be implemented in the event of a Taiwan contingency. They said the Japanese Self-Defence Forces would provide logistical support to the units, including providing fuel and ammunition.

China has [criticised](#) the move as ‘using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen military deployment in the region’, while Russian spokespersons warned of ‘necessary and proportionate steps’ in reaction to the deployment.

PM Ishiba survives confirmation as head of minority government

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was [confirmed](#) in his post on 11 November after a close-run confirmation vote in the Lower House of the Diet. A parliamentary runoff vote became the key to his confirmation for the first time in three decades, as former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, leader of the largest opposition party, was foiled in

his attempt to topple Ishiba’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) by other opposition parties. Ishiba now stands at the head of a minority government that is sorely in need of outside support from other opposition parties, though even that may not be enough to pass the Budget and other finance bills.

In the first round of voting, none of the candidates secured enough votes to obtain a majority, leading to a rarely-used runoff round of voting to be held. In the second round, Ishiba finally edged out Noda with 221 votes against the latter’s 160 and 84 deemed invalid. The LDP-controlled Upper House also reelected Ishiba with a comfortable margin, leading to his confirmation as the 103rd Prime Minister of Japan. In a press conference at his office, Ishiba stated that the new state of affairs could be said to be ‘good for democracy in a sense’ and pledged to work with opposition parties to ‘protect the safety and security of the people in a careful and humble manner’. He also vowed to make political funding ‘crystal clear’ in a direct reference to the massive slush funds scandal that broke in 2023.