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Prime Minister Suga attends the Quad Leader's Summit

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga visited the US for in-person Quad meeting on September 24. Alongside the US President Joe Biden, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Japan pledged to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific, anchored in international law, especially upholding the maritime rules-based order in the East and South China Seas.

This was Prime Minister Suga's last visit to the US following his decision to step down from office. Earlier in April, Prime Minister Suga visited the US after President Joe Biden assumed office and jointly outlined the US-Japan Global Partnership for a New Era. While in the US, Prime Minister Suga also held bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As the Quad nations agree to foster a secured technology ecosystem, they have launched several initiatives including a semiconductor supply chain initiative; a Track 1.5 industry discussion on Open RAN deployment and adoption; set up contact groups on Advanced Communications and Artificial Intelligence; and the statement of principles on tech governance advancing high-standards innovation. In battling the climate crisis, Quad partners have launched a clean-hydrogen partnership with the objective of easing costs across all stages of the clean-hydrogen value chain. They also agreed to build a Green-Shipping Network. The Quad Shipping Taskforce aims to build a network with Los Angeles, Mumbai Port Trust, Sydney (Botany), and Yokohama, to support decarbonisation of the shipping value chain. Furthermore, Quad leaders have decided to set up an Infrastructure

Coordination Group to push for high-standards infrastructure, and discuss technical assistance and capacity-building efforts, to confirm that each nation's efforts are complementary in pursuing the regional infrastructure demand.

Suga-Modi meeting in the US

On the side-lines of the Quad Leaders' Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga on September 23 in Washington. This was their maiden in-person meeting. As Suga decided not to run for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidency, and consequently step down as the Prime Minister of Japan, this was Prime Minister Modi's chance to express gratitude to Suga for his personal commitment as Prime Minister, and previously as Chief Cabinet Secretary in strengthening the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. The developing situation in Afghanistan and the security situation in the Indo-Pacific was the mainstay of their discussion. Furthermore, bolstering bilateral security cooperation, and advancing defence equipment and technology cooperation was underscored. On the economic side, India emphasised the need to deepen cooperation in manufacturing, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and skill development. Prime Minister Suga informed Prime Minister Modi that Japan will undertake skill and language tests in India beginning 2022 in order to operationalize the Specified Skilled Workers agreement. Additionally, Japan's potential participation in India's National Hydrogen Energy Mission was discussed. As Prime Minister Suga departs from office, both leaders expressed confidence that the thrust in India-Japan strategic partnership will continue.

Fumio Kishida to become the next Prime Minister

In the ruling LDP presidential election held on September 29, Fumio Kishida was elected as the next leader of the party. Four candidates ran for the party's presidential post including former foreign minister Fumio Kishida, regulatory reform minister Taro Kono, former internal affairs and communications minister Sanae Takaichi, and party's executive acting secretary-general Seiko Noda. As none of the candidates could manage more than 50 per cent of votes in the first round, the top two candidates — Kishida and Kono went into a runoff where the former secured 257 votes compared to the latter's 170. Following his election to the party presidency, he choose Akira Amari as the secretary-general, Sanae Takaichi as the policy research council chairperson, Tatsuo Fukuda as the general council chairperson, and Toshiaki Endo as the election strategy committee chairperson. Kishida will take charge as the Prime Minister of Japan on October 4.

North Korean ballistic missiles fell in Japan's exclusive economic zone

North Korea has fired a ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan early on September 28. Previously, defence ministry reportedly confirmed that two North Korean ballistic missiles flew about 750 kms and fell inside Japan's exclusive economic zone on September 15. Additionally, on September 11 and 12, Pyongyang test-fired newly developed long-range cruise missiles. While Japanese Prime Minister Suga said that the government is on high alert, and is monitoring the situation, Pyongyang's ambassador to the United Nations, Kim Song defended North Korea's nuclear and missile programme. He argued that "given that the US and South Korean military alliance has increased military threats against the DPRK, no one can deny our right to self-defence to develop, test, manufacture and purchase the weapon

systems equivalent to the ones which are purchased or developed by them".

Meanwhile, Seoul has successfully test-fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile on September 15. South Korean authorities reportedly confirmed that the missile, loaded on a 3,000-ton-class submarine, fired from underwater, flew as intended, and precisely hit the target. South Korean President, Moon Jae-in urged the military to enhance its defence capabilities to manage threats from North Korea. Pyongyang also has its own submarine-launched ballistic missile development programme.

Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement

Japan and the UK decided to begin negotiations on the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). The aim is to enhance interoperability and security cooperation to realise a free and open Indo-Pacific. The first round of negotiations is scheduled in early October.

In a separate development, British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth docked at the US Naval base in Yokosuka in early September. Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi inspected the aircraft carrier and shared his views with the commander of the UK carrier strike group on regional security situation.

Foreign submarine spotted east of Amami-Oshima Island

The Maritime Self-Defence Force spotted a foreign submarine, alleged to be Chinese, outside Japan's territorial waters, east of Amami-Oshima Island, situated in Kagoshima prefecture. Japanese destroyer and patrol aircraft monitored the submarine, which subsequently left the contiguous zone. Japan engaged in collecting information and employed surveillance with a sense of urgency. The submersed reportedly did not enter Japanese territorial waters. Japan believes that the submarine could be Chinese since its destroyer was nearby.