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By: TA | AP Brief

India and Japan enhance military and arms industry cooperation



Japan and India agreed to enhance their military and arms industry cooperation, including allowing Japanese troops to conduct live-fire missile training at Indian firing ranges in future joint drills, as their defense and foreign ministers met Thursday in Tokyo.

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi joined their Indian counterparts, Rajnath Singh and S. Jaishankar, at the “two-plus-two" meeting in Tokyo.

The two Asian powers have been rapidly deepening security, defense and economic ties in recent years amid growing tension and uncertainty in the region.

India and Japan also are part of the Quad grouping with the United States and Australia that aims to counter China’s influence.

“Through our cooperation, we hope to serve as the anchor for the Indo-Pacific region,” Motegi told a joint news conference after the talks.

This defense industrial cooperation will proceed under the framework of “design with Japan, make in India,” Singh said.

As an island nation with limited space to safely conduct missile tests and training, Japan needs defense partners that can provide facilities for its military to practice live-fire drills essential to improving missile capability. Japan struck a similar arrangement with Australia this year.

Air and maritime security

Japan has been fortifying defenses in its southwestern region to deter China's growing military activity and started deploying long-range missiles this year, including Type-12 surface-to-ship missiles mobilized in Kumamoto on the southern main island.

Japan has also significantly relaxed its postwar pacifist principles in recent years and lifted a ban on lethal weapons exports as part of its security, defense and economic growth strategies.

On Thursday, the four ministers agreed to promote cooperation in defense equipment and technology and to accelerate negotiations toward achieving the transfer of the Japanese naval radio antenna UNICORN to India.

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Singh, escorted by Koizumi, visited Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force's naval base in Yokosuka on Wednesday for a tour of the Japanese Mogami-class frigate, JS Natori, equipped with the UNICORN integrated stealth mast system.

The upgraded Mogami-class multi-purpose frigates will replace Australia's retiring naval fleet.

Japan and Australia in April signed contracts under which Japan delivers the first three, with the remaining eight to be constructed in Australia.

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Japan and India reaffirmed deepening cooperation in a range of areas including air and maritime security, information sharing, search and rescue operations, naval shipbuilding and artificial intelligence, according to a ministers' joint statement after the talks.