

Indo-Japan Relationship

Why in news?

Japan's Prime Minister announced that he would step down as a chronic illness has resurfaced.

Who is Japan's PM?

- Shinzo Abe is Japan's Prime Minister.
- Abe, whose tenure began in 2012, was due to be in office till September 2021.
- He had first become the PM in 2006, but resigned in 2007 due to illness.

How committed was Abe for a relationship with India?

- In his first stint in 2006-07, Abe visited India and addressed Parliament.
- During his second stint, he visited India thrice.
- He was the first Japanese PM to be Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade in 2014.

How did the Indo-Japan ties transform?

- The foundation for "Global Partnership between Japan and India" was laid in 2001.
- Annual bilateral summits were agreed in 2005.
- However, it was Abe who accelerated the pace of ties since 2012.
- **In first term** - Abe, who visited India in 2007, laid the foundation for his concept of Indo-Pacific.
- This concept has now become mainstream and one of the main pillars of Indo-Japan ties.
- **In second term** - Abe helped build the relationship further.
- In 2014, Narendra Modi as PM chose Japan for his first bilateral visit outside the neighbourhood.
- Modi and Abe agreed to upgrade the bilateral relationship to "Special Strategic and Global Partnership".
- The relationship encompassed issues like civilian nuclear energy, maritime security, quality infrastructure, Act East policy and Indo-Pacific strategy.

How was the Indo-Japan nuclear deal signed?

- When Modi went to Japan in 2014, the Indo-Japan nuclear deal was still uncertain.
- This is so because Tokyo was sensitive about a deal with a non-Nuclear-Proliferation-Treaty member country.
- Abe's government convinced the anti-nuclear hawks in Japan to sign the agreement in 2016.
- The pact was a key to India's deals with US and French nuclear firms, which were either owned by or had stakes in Japanese firms.

What are the defence agreements?

- Under Abe, the two sides decided to have Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting (2+2).
- They are negotiating the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), a military logistics support pact.
- In November 2019, the first Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting was held in New Delhi.
- In 2015, a pact for transfer of defence equipment and technology was also signed.

What is the Indo-Pacific strategy?

- During Abe's tenure, India and Japan came closer in the Indo-Pacific architecture.
- Abe had spelt out his vision of the Confluence of the Two Seas in his 2007 speech when the Quad was formed.
- But, Quad collapsed soon.
- In 2017, Chinese aggression grew in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, and India's borders in Doklam.
- As a result, Abe mooted the idea of reviving the Quad.
- Quad was revived as Indian, Japanese, Australia and US officials met in Manila on the sidelines of the East Asia summit.

What is Japan's stand on India-China stand-offs?

- Since 2013, Indian and Chinese soldiers have had four border-stand-offs, including the ongoing one since May 2020.
- Abe's Japan has stood with India through each of them.
- Japan has made statements against China for changing the status quo.

What are the infrastructural investments?

- During Abe's visit in 2015, India decided to introduce the **Shinkansen system** (bullet train), due to begin in 2022.

- Under Abe's leadership, India and Japan formed the **Act East Forum**.
- The Forum is engaged in projects in the Northeast.
- The two countries also planned **joint projects** in Maldives and Sri Lanka among others to counter Beijing's influence.

What is next?

- Much to India's comfort, Abe did not get distracted by India's domestic developments.
- He focused on strategic, economic and political deliverables.
- India will now wait for Abe's successor, who will have big shoes to fill.

Source: The Indian Express

Quick Fact

Quad

- Quad is a multilateral grouping among Japan, Australia, India and the United States.
- Quad was convened, in 2017, at the level of senior officials on the margins of the East Asia Summit in Bangkok.
- There are common references to the creation of a free, open and inclusive regional architecture, rules-of-the-road, freedom of navigation and over-flight, and, ASEAN centrality.