Statesmanship on Paying Homage

Why in news?

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Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited to Pearl Harbour this week.

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Why the apology has been delayed?

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- In the case of Japan, the conservatives have long regarded that any attempt to apologise for Pearl Harbour incident in 1941 as nothing but a betrayal of the national interest.
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- In the US view, the horror in Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war to a close sooner than it might otherwise have been. They have also sought to reject the narrative that the dropping of the atom bomb was a calculated demonstration of U.S. and western military superiority in a Cold War scenario.
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Were there precedence?

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- Much earlier this year the **Canadian PM Justin Trudeau** has formally apologized in the House of Commons for the **Komagata Maru incident**.
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- **Kniefall von Warschau** was a famous incident that happened on December 7, 1970, during a visit to a monument of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by the then **German Chancellor Willy Brandt**.
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- After laying down a wreath, Brandt, spontaneously knelt. He remained silently in that position for a short time apologising for the crimes commited in Warsaw Ghetto.

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Why is it significant?

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- Earlier U.S. President Barack Obama paid his homage at the peace memorial at Hiroshima.
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- Both the leaders have undertaken this bold and difficult journey on behalf of their peoples.
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- Conspicuous gestures of reconciliation between nations to heal the deep emotional wounds of wars will have connotations that go beyond the symbolic.
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- Abe and Obama have displayed a statesmanlike readiness to rise above partisan accounts.
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- They emphasised the need to bridge the gulf that neither history nor geography could have narrowed.
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- “The ability to acknowledge a wrong that has been done, to simply say sorry, will go a far far longer way than some percentage of GDP in the form of aid.”
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- Prime Minister Abe and President Obama have shown how history can be revisited in a realistic manner.
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- It remains for countries grappling with their own complex pasts to draw the right lessons from this.
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