

India to hold combat drills with US, Russia & Japan

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New Delhi: India will next month hold military exercises with three of its strategic partners, the US, Russia and Japan, just before resuming its annual combat drill with China in December after the Doklam troop face-off last year led to a freeze in bilateral military-to-military ties.

The exercise named “Dharma Guardian” with Japan, which will be held at the Army’s Counter-Insurgency Warfare School at Vairengte (Mizoram) from November 1 to 14, is especially significant since it will be the first-ever joint land military exercise between the two countries.

This will be followed by the “Indra” mechanised infantry exercise with Russia at Babina from November 16 to 29. The “Vajra Prahar” combat drills between the Special Forces of India and US, in turn, will be held at the Mahajan field firing ranges from November 19

to December 2.

“Such exercises constitute an effective diplomatic tool to enhance strategic ties and military-to-military cooperation with friendly countries. The resumption of the Hand-in-Hand exercise with China is more of a confidence-building mea-

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sure between the two armies deployed along the line of actual control from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh,” said a senior officer.

India and Japan have been steadily stepping up their bilateral defence ties, with an eye firmly on an aggressive and expansionist China. “Exercise Dharma Guardian will be yet another step to deepen bilateral strategic ties,” said Army spokesperson Colonel Aman Anand. India and the US have been steadily cranking up the scope, strength, complexity and frequency of their bilateral military exercises.