

Infra projects to be in focus during PM's Japan visit

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New Delhi: India and Japan are likely to announce a slew of infrastructure projects and sign an agreement on maritime domain awareness (MDA) when PM Narendra Modi travels to Tokyo for his third visit on October 28-29.

Japanese ambassador Kenji Hiramatsu quoted Modi as saying that Japan was the cornerstone of India's Indo-Pacific policy, adding that India and Japan are on the same page. He was answering questions at a briefing organised by the Brookings Institution here.

Japanese PM Shinzo Abe will make a rare summit visit to China to meet President Xi Jinping on October 26-27, a day before his summit with Modi. As China battles a trade war with the US, Beijing appears to have softened its approach to both India and Japan. In return, Japanese companies are said to be exploring participation in Belt and Road Initiative projects. India remains opposed to the BRI, a fact Hiramatsu acknowledged, adding that Tokyo respected India's position.

Nevertheless, PM Modi and President Xi are getting ready to meet on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Argentina in November as well as the East Asia summit in Singapore.

The envoy said the focus of India-Japan relations was on defence and security, going beyond economy and investment. However, addressing questions on recent difficulties regarding land acquisition for the bullet train project, Hiramatsu said, "The Prime Ministers have decided to go ahead with this project so I am very confident that under the very strong leadership of the two PMs, this will be completed as expected on schedule.

Land acquisition is a very important aspect of any infrastructure project. Japanese teams and Indian teams are working very closely and have mutual trust, and I have 100% trust in India to complete this high



Narendra Modi

speed railway project."

While the defence and security relationship includes a slew of joint exercises and formal negotiations for a LEMOA-like agreement on logistics sharing, called ACSA, eyes are on the possible sale of the US-2 amphibious planes as well as some Japanese submarines. Hiramatsu said discussions were on for both, though there was no visible progress yet. However, he said Indian and Japanese researchers were working on developing an unmanned armoured vehicle which would be useful for India in its hostile border areas.