

Modi, Abe to announce joint infra projects in Indo-Pacific region

One of the deals to be signed will be on Japan giving a second tranche of funds for the bullet train project

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PM Narendra Modi will meet Japanese PM Shinzo Abe on Monday. PTI

New Delhi: India and Japan could announce the undertaking of joint infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region during a summit meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe early next week.

One of the key agreements the two sides expect to sign during the 28-29 October meeting is on Japan giving a second tranche of funds for the flagship Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed railway, foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale said. A first tranche of funds of ₹5,500 crore was given to India last month.

Modi is set to meet Abe for the 12th time in four-and-a-half years on Monday, signalling the strong ties between Asia's second and third largest economies.

Modi will arrive in Japan on Saturday as Abe returns from a three-day visit to China, his first in six years to Beijing following tensions between the neighbours over some islands in the East China Sea.

Abe has repeatedly said that a strong India is in Japan's interest and has extended cooperation for infrastructure and flagship programmes such as Digital India, Skill India and Make in India. All of these were aimed at propelling India into a higher economic growth and development orbit.

A key area of discussion will be "how we can collaborate in the context of the Indo-Pacific in Asia and in Africa on capacity building and in projects in a trilateral manner. In other words India, Japan plus one," said Gokhale.

India and Japan announced the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) in November 2016, seen as a counter to China's

ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Projects for collaboration expected to be taken up under the AAGC include capacity building, human resource development, creating quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity and people-to-people partnership besides investment opportunities and renewable energy.

India and Japan are collaborating in building a liquefied natural gas terminal in Sri Lanka and would look at similar projects in India's immediate neighbourhood, said Gokhale.

Gokhale said that he expected issues such as land acquisition, which are holding back the big-ticket high speed railway project, to be sorted out by January next year with both sides looking forward to completing the project by 2022.

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