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India, Japan exploring joint defence business opportunities in Africa

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Minister Arun Jaitley met Japanese PM Shinzo Abe during his Tokyo visit | Source: @sujanchinoy

High-powered delegation accompanies minister Arun Jaitley to Tokyo, discusses Asia-Africa Growth Corridor plan

India and Japan are exploring joint business opportunities in the defence and security sector in Africa, as part of their ambitious Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) plan that is seen by some as a counter to the China's 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) initiative.

In a big push for collaboration on military technology, a high-powered industry delegation accompanying defence minister Arun Jaitley to Tokyo, was briefed on the AAGC plan to jointly pursue business plans and was encouraged to forge partnerships with Japanese companies.

The Africa plan – to create a sea corridor between the continent and South East Asia – has been in the works since March this year. Upcoming events include an AAGC symposium in Japan and joint business missions to Africa.

The delegation, which included the heads of Mahindra Defence, Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL), Alpha Design and L&T's head of submarine systems, also met senior Japanese defence and foreign ministry officials as part of the visit.

The visit is being seen as a precursor to a major announcement on defence collaboration between the two nations when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits India next week. The two sides have been keen on joint military production but the mainstay project — to make the US 2 amphibious aircraft in India — has hit a dead end on pricing issues.

Several rounds of business-to-business meetings were carried out in the presence of senior Indian defence ministry officials as well as personnel from the Japanese Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA).

“This is the first time that business leaders have met at such a high level and this is the beginning of a new strategic relationship. Japan will still need to deal with — on a case to case basis — the issue of exporting military technology, but the process of dialogue has already started,” Vivek Pandit, head, defence & aerospace of FICCI, told ThePrint.

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