

Japan calls for 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy'

Japan's diplomacy with India during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's latest visit, highlighted the country's intensifying focus on the Indo-Pacific region and Tokyo's evolving foreign policy.

Speaking to the media, Japan government's spokesperson laid out the overarching nature of the new concept, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" that aims to prepare Japan to deal with the fast changing global and regional order and threats from China and North Korea.

Spokesperson Norio Maruyama's presentation before the media introduced the new Japanese strategy that will build peace pro-actively, based on "diplomacy that takes a panoramic view of the world map".

He stated that the strategy aims to create a "free and open" Asia-Pacific region which connects parts of eastern Africa, south Asia and southeast Asia with the western Pacific Ocean region and Japan.

"Japan will expand infrastructure, development, trade and investment, and enhance business environment and human development from East Asia as a starting point, to the Middle East and Africa," it stated.

The 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' rests on "two oceans" — Indian and Pacific — and "two continents" — Africa and Asia. It is understood that Japan is quietly challenging China's aggressive plans in the South China Sea that pose a threat to the energy lane that sustains Japanese economy.

The government of Shinzo Abe believes that connectivity between Asia and Africa through a free and open Indo-Pacific, is expected to support stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. Interestingly, a joint statement issued at the end of the visit did not mention 'South China Sea'.

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