

Quad officials discuss holding leaders' summit

MEA declines to comment on date

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Senior officials of Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. met in a video conference on Thursday for the first Quad meeting since March, when the leaders of the grouping had decided on a number of initiatives including cooperation on countering the COVID-19 pandemic. As *The Hindu* had reported earlier, an “in-person” Quad Foreign Ministerial meeting, as well

as the possibility of a Quad summit involving Prime Minister Narendra Modi, U.S. President Joe Biden, Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga are being discussed for September this year.

“The [officials] welcomed the opportunity to continue regular consultations at the ministerial, senior official, and working levels and to hold a second Leaders’ Summit this fall,” a U.S. State Department statement said.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson declined to comment on the



The four heads of the Quad countries had held talks in March. ■ FILE PHOTO

date of the meetings. Diplomatic sources confirmed that all four leaders are expected to attend the UN General Assembly meeting in New York this year, and discussions are under way for

them to meet in Washington during that visit, but their travels and the summit is contingent on the COVID situations in each of the four countries.

Regional issues

During the meeting, Quad country officials talked about the decision to launch working groups on other areas of emerging technologies and climate change, and “exchanged views” on regional issues such as East and South China Seas, where the Chinese Navy has had conflicts over territorial

rights with other countries, North Korean actions, and military rule in Myanmar.

Making a particular mention of the Quad as a grouping of “four democracies”, the U.S. statement said officials discussed “strategic challenges confronting the region, countering disinformation, promoting democracy and human rights”, and, in a veiled reference to China, said they would “support countries vulnerable to coercive actions in the Indo-Pacific region”. The officials also discussed plans to cooperate on COVID vaccines.