

No link between AUKUS and Quad: govt.

PM to meet Biden and Harris but focus will be on regional security; he will also attend Quad summit

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet U.S. President Joe Biden and attend the Quadrilateral (Quad) summit along with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Friday, but there is “no link” between his meetings and the newly announced Australia-U.K.-U.S. (AUKUS) alliance, the government said on Tuesday.

In the first such comments indicating that New Delhi is distancing itself from the new partnership, Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla said the Quad meeting would deal with issues such as the pandemic, new and emerging technologies, climate change, infrastructure, maritime security, education, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, while AUKUS was a “security alliance”.

“We are not party to this alliance. From our perspec-



Focus point: Taliban fighters in Herat on Tuesday. The bilateral meeting will feature the developments in Afghanistan. •AFP

tive, this is neither relevant to the Quad, nor will it have any impact on its functioning,” Mr. Shringla told presspersons at a briefing on the Prime Minister’s visit.

Afghan situation

Mr. Modi is expected to begin his visit to the U.S. on September 24, and will hold talks with Kamala Harris, the first U.S. Vice-President of Indian origin, in their first face-to-face meeting. He will also meet a group of American business leaders and CEOs as

well as hold bilateral meetings with the Australian and Japanese heads of state. On September 25, Mr. Modi will meet Mr. Biden and both leaders will attend the Quad summit subsequently. Mr. Modi is expected to fly to New York later that evening and address the United Nations General Assembly the next morning.

“The bilateral meeting will also feature the current regional security situation following recent developments in Afghanistan, and

our stakes as a neighbour, and a long-standing and preferred development partner of the people of Afghanistan. In this context, we would undoubtedly discuss the need to see an end to radicalism, extremism, cross border terrorism and the dismantling of global terrorist networks. They will also discuss the reform of the multilateral system, including the UN Security Council,” Mr. Shringla said.

Apart from reviewing the India-U.S. comprehensive strategic global partnership, Mr. Modi and Mr. Biden would discuss trade and investment ties, defence and security collaborations, and the “green” strategic clean energy partnership during their bilateral meeting.

Mr. Shringla said the focus, in particular, would be on how to operationalise the four foundational defence agreements that India and the U.S. have now signed.

When asked if Mr. Modi’s

meetings and the Quad summit would be impacted or overshadowed by the big U.S.-Australian defence partnership, Mr. Shringla said the two events were not linked and denied the new partnership would mean that the Quad would only deal with “softer issues”.

‘Different visions’

“There is no link between AUKUS and Quad. AUKUS is a security alliance, Quad is a different group of countries working on a different vision... of the Indo Pacific as a free, open, transparent, inclusive region. And in the same sentiment, the Malabar exercises [maritime exercises involving Australia, India, Japan and the U.S.] are those that are done between different nations and has nothing to do with Quad,” Mr. Shringla said. He also said India had noted Australia’s clarification that the AUKUS partnership only dealt with nuclear power technology, and hence, was not a case of “nuclear proliferation”.