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Japan and **Cambodia** have agreed on Saturday to enhance maritime security cooperation between the two nations, specifically by establishing the principle of the rule of law to settle disputes in the Asia-Pacific region. Japanese Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** and his Cambodian counterpart **Hun Sen** have come to an agreement that there needs to be an improvement in the cooperation between their defense authorities and work together to improve health and medical care in Cambodia, this according to a joint statement that they released after their summit in Phnom Penh.

The two leaders “underscored the importance of settling maritime disputes by peaceful means in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law in order to establish the principle of the rule of the law in the Asia-Pacific region,” the statement said. The document obviously alludes to the territorial rows between China and some Southeast Asian countries in the South China Sea as well as one between China and Japan in the East China Sea. Cambodia has close ties with China, and Abe’s trip to the Cambodian capital is the first by a Japanese prime minister in 13 years. The visit is believed to be aimed at **keeping Beijing’s influence in the region in check**.

Abe and Hun Sen also came to other agreements, including Japan assisting the capacity building of Cambodian peacekeeping officers. Cambodia is the first country where a Japanese mission consisting of Self-Defense Forces, police officers and election observers joined U.N. peacekeeping operations in 1992. The two leaders also agreed that Japan will utilize its advanced medical technologies and systems to help improve health and medical care in Cambodia. Abe said that Japan will launch a hospital providing emergency care in Cambodia in March 2015, which will be constructed at a cost of 4 billion yen (around US\$40 million) with investment from a government-linked fund, engineering firm JGC Corp. and Kitahara International Hospital based in Hachioji in the suburbs of Tokyo.

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