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JAPAN

Digest

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Japan's responses to North Korea missile launches

On 30 May North Korea [launched](#) what it called a 'satellite' from a launch-pad around the Tongchang-ri area, which flew for a few minutes before failing first-phase separation and crashing into the seas near North Korea itself. Tokyo treated the missile as a ballistic missile launch, and thus as a further violation of United Nations Security Council sanctions, with Prime Minister Kishida declaring to the press that the launch is 'a serious issue that affects the [Japanese] people's safety'. He called on Pyongyang to 'exercise restraint', while Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu described it as a 'serious provocation'. Defence Minister Hamada ordered the Self-Defence Forces into readiness, and authorised the use of Patriot-3 interceptor missiles as well as Aegis ship-mounted systems to bring the rocket down should it fly into Japanese territories. Not all the Patriot batteries could be positioned, however, as an oncoming typhoon made it difficult to transport and set up the missiles on some of the outlying Japanese islands close to the Korean peninsula.

North Korea [continued](#) its provocative activities later in the month as well, with a launch of two short-range ballistic missiles from its capital region that flew east and splashed into Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on 15 June. Prime Minister Kishida characterised the latest launch as a

'violent action threatening international peace and security. The second set of launches are believed to have been in response to the fifth round of joint US-South Korean live-fire drills being conducted in the demilitarised zone between the two Koreas.

Developments in security-related legislation

On 7 June, the Japanese parliament [enacted](#) a law to create a system that it intends to be used to allow the government to take over sick or poorly-functioning defence manufacturing units operated by the private sector. The provisions of the new law allow the Government of Japan to buy out factories if private management is proven to be unable to run it efficiently, and outsource the day-to-day manufacturing activities to other companies in the sector. The aim of the law is to grow more domestic capabilities in defence manufacturing, so as to allow for healthy growth of the sector.

On 16 June, the parliament also [passed](#) legislation to create a pool of funds that is intended to cover a substantial part of the proposed hike in defence spending envisaged until 2027. The law enables the government to set aside some sources of nontax revenue aside to enable spending over many years. The primary sources of these funds are expected to include proceeds from the sale of government assets as well as surplus funds from some special accounts of the national budget. The

bill was passed in the face of stiff opposition from the minority opposition, which attempted to halt the passage of the legislation in both houses by introducing no-confidence motions against the finance minister. Motions in both houses were defeated, as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party controls both houses.

Japan, EU meeting on economic security

On 27 June Japan and the European Union (EU) [agreed](#) to deepen their economic security cooperation by strengthening the resilience of relevant supply chains for semiconductors and other critical materials. The Japanese side was represented by Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura and Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, whereas the EU was represented by Valdis Dombrovskis, executive vice-president of the European Commission for an Economy that Works for People. At the meeting, both sides also agreed to take steps against China's economic coercion, and affirmed the importance of protecting the movement of digital data across borders to the highest cybersecurity standards.

Japan ranks 125th in gender index

Japan [ranked](#) 125th of 146 countries ranked by the World Economic Forum in its annual Global Gender Gap index in 2023, designating its worst score yet, and the lowest score in the region. With a score of 0.647 in 2023 as opposed to 0.650 in 2022, Japan fell far behind neighbours South

Korea (rank 105) and China (rank 107), and is now ranked even behind Saudi Arabia (rank 131) and Kuwait (137) in some fields. Among the G-7, Japan scored last, with the next worst performance being by Italy, ranked 79th. The country performed worst in the headings of political empowerment, economic participation and opportunity, and the WEF estimated that Japan would take 131 years to fully close the gender gap given current trends.