

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Mehul Singh Gill

JAPAN

26 June 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan Approves Air Self-Defense Force Reorganization to Strengthen Space Operations

Japan's parliament approved legislation to reorganize and rename the Air Self-Defense Force to reflect its expanding role in space operations. The restructuring includes the establishment of a dedicated space operations group to enhance space domain awareness and satellite surveillance capabilities. The legislation also authorizes the appointment of a second senior vice defence minister, increases post-retirement benefits to support personnel recruitment and retention, and upgrades the Ground Self-Defense Force's 15th Brigade in Okinawa to a full division as part of broader defence reforms.

2 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan and India Expand Cooperation on Semiconductors, Critical Minerals, and Artificial Intelligence

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in semiconductors, critical minerals, artificial intelligence, and maritime security during talks in New Delhi. The two leaders adopted a joint declaration on economic security, emphasizing resilient supply chains and closer collaboration in strategic technologies. They also announced a joint statement on AI cooperation and witnessed the conclusion of around 120 memorandums of cooperation involving private-sector investments valued at approximately ¥2 trillion, further expanding the countries' strategic and economic partnership.

11 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Philippines to Acquire Retired Japanese Destroyers Under Defense Cooperation Initiative

The Philippines is expected to acquire five retired Abukuma-class destroyers from Japan under an agreement aimed at strengthening bilateral defence cooperation. The transfer follows commitments by both governments to accelerate defence equipment cooperation after Japan eased restrictions on defence exports. Philippine officials stated that the vessels are expected to be transferred over the coming years, with technical and administrative arrangements still being finalized. The planned transfer builds on expanding security ties between the two countries, including previous cooperation in defence equipment and joint military activities.

11 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): JAXA Successfully Tests Reusable Rocket Prototype

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) successfully conducted a flight test of its RV-X reusable rocket prototype, marking progress in the development of reusable launch technology aimed at reducing the cost of future space missions. During the test, the prototype completed a controlled vertical takeoff, horizontal movement, and landing. Data from the trial will support the development of the Callisto reusable launch vehicle, a joint project with France and Germany, as Japan seeks to expand its space launch capabilities through reusable rocket technology.

13 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan and Vietnam Launch Talks on Joint Development of High-Speed Landing Craft

Japan and Vietnam agreed to begin discussions on the joint development and production of high-speed landing craft as part of efforts to expand bilateral defense cooperation. During talks in Tokyo, the two countries also agreed to strengthen collaboration in areas including cybersecurity and reaffirmed their commitment to freedom of navigation, overflight, and adherence to the international rules-based order. The meeting reflected broader efforts by both governments to enhance defense ties and promote regional peace and stability amid evolving security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

17 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan Revises Imperial House Law to Address Shrinking Royal Family

Japan's parliament approved revisions to the Imperial House Law aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the imperial family while retaining the country's male-line succession system. The amendments allow female members of the imperial family to retain their status after marrying commoners and permit the adoption of males from former imperial branch families into the imperial household. The legislation does not alter existing succession rules, under which only male descendants in the paternal line are eligible to ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne, leaving broader succession reforms unresolved.

19 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan Defense Minister Calls for Debate on Nuclear Deterrence Policy

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi stated that Japan should engage in discussions on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence as part of the government's ongoing review of its national security strategy. He cited changes in the international security environment and

developments in Europe as reasons for considering the issue. While reaffirming that Japan continues to rely on the United States' extended nuclear deterrence and maintains its longstanding non-nuclear principles, Koizumi argued that debates on nuclear policy should not be excluded from broader national security discussions.

22 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan Reaffirms Defense and Security Cooperation with ASEAN

Japan reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening defense and security cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) during a meeting of foreign ministers in Manila. Discussions focused on maritime security, economic security, critical mineral supply chains, artificial intelligence, and disaster response. Separately, Japan joined the United States, Australia, and India in reaffirming Quad cooperation with ASEAN, while trilateral talks with the United States and South Korea addressed North Korea, cybersecurity, and regional security issues, including peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

23 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): JAXA Conducts Successful Epsilon S Rocket Engine Test Following Earlier Setbacks

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) successfully completed a ground test of the Epsilon S rocket's second-stage engine, marking progress in the development of the country's next-generation small launch vehicle after two previous engine test failures in 2023 and 2024. The test evaluated the performance of a modified M-35a motor and collected data on thrust, temperature, and structural performance for further analysis. JAXA aims to launch an Epsilon S demonstrator by the end of the fiscal year as part of efforts to strengthen Japan's independent satellite launch capabilities.

24 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan Accelerates Drone Capability Development Amid Evolving Security Challenges

Japan is expanding investment in unmanned systems and domestic drone production as the Ministry of Defense adapts to lessons from recent conflicts, including the Russia–Ukraine war. The fiscal 2026 defense budget allocates ¥100.1 billion for the SHIELD program, a layered defense system designed to integrate large numbers of unmanned platforms for coastal defense operations. Defense officials have also emphasized the importance of dual-use technologies, rapid innovation, and strengthening Japan's domestic drone industry to enhance operational capabilities and support future defense requirements.

24 July 2026 ([Kyodo News](#)): Japan to Launch National Intelligence Bureau to Strengthen Intelligence Coordination

Japan's Cabinet approved the establishment of a National Intelligence Bureau, scheduled to begin operations on 31 July, as part of broader efforts to strengthen the country's intelligence and counterespionage capabilities. The new bureau will serve as the secretariat of the National Intelligence Council, which will coordinate intelligence activities across the government and begin work on Japan's first national intelligence strategy. Officials stated that the reforms are intended to improve intelligence collection and policy coordination, while future legislation is expected to address additional counterintelligence and foreign influence measures.

NORTH KOREA

2 July 2026 ([NK News](#)): Report Identifies North Korea as Leading Source of Cryptocurrency Theft in First Half of 2026

A report by blockchain analytics firm TRM Labs estimated that North Korean cyber actors stole approximately US\$643 million in cryptocurrency during the first half of 2026, accounting for the largest share of global cryptocurrency theft. According to the report, the majority of the losses stemmed from attacks on the Drift Protocol and KelpDAO platforms. TRM assessed the operations as state-directed campaigns involving sophisticated infrastructure compromises and concluded that North Korean actors remain the largest source of stolen cryptocurrency value worldwide despite a decline from record levels reported in 2025.

16 July 2026 ([KCNA](#)): Senior North Korean and Chinese Officials Hold Talks on Expanding Bilateral Cooperation

Senior officials from North Korea and China held high-level talks in Pyongyang as part of the Chinese party and government delegation's official goodwill visit. WPK Secretary Jo Yong Won and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Chairman Wang Huning discussed strengthening party-to-party exchanges and expanding cooperation in the economic, cultural, and other sectors. Both sides also reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining close strategic communication and implementing the DPRK–China Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance ahead of its 65th anniversary commemorations.

17 July 2026 ([KCNA](#)): North Korea and China Mark 65th Anniversary of Friendship Treaty

North Korea and China commemorated the 65th anniversary of the DPRK–China Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with an official reception in Pyongyang attended by a Chinese party and government delegation led by Wang Huning. Senior officials from both countries highlighted the significance of the treaty and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining and expanding bilateral cooperation. The event formed part of the Chinese delegation's official goodwill visit to North Korea and underscored the continued importance both governments attach to their longstanding strategic relationship.

20 July 2026 ([NK News](#)): North Korean Foreign Minister Reaffirms Support for Russia During Moscow Visit

North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where she reaffirmed Pyongyang's commitment to supporting Russia in the war in Ukraine. According to Russian and North Korean official accounts, the discussions focused on bilateral relations and the implementation of the countries' strategic partnership. Putin expressed appreciation for North Korea's support and conveyed greetings to Kim Jong Un. The visit formed part of continued high-level engagement between Moscow and Pyongyang following the expansion of bilateral strategic cooperation in recent years.

SOUTH KOREA

30 June 2026 ([Yonhap News Agency](#)): South Korean Defense Minister Supports Plan to Consolidate Military Academies

South Korean Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back reaffirmed the government's proposal to merge the Army, Navy and Air Force academies into a single institution, describing the initiative as a fundamental reform to address demographic challenges and strengthen joint military education. The proposal aims to improve interoperability among future officers through integrated training and modernized curricula while expanding education in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence. The plan has drawn opposition from retired military leaders and alumni associations concerned about preserving the separate service academies.

8 July 2026 ([Yonhap News Agency](#)): South Korea and Ukraine Agree on Humanitarian Approach to North Korean Prisoners of War

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy agreed to address the issue of North Korean prisoners of war held by Ukraine in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles, while respecting the individuals' wishes. The agreement was reached during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the NATO Summit in Ankara. The leaders also discussed South Korea's continued support for Ukraine, including a US\$100 million assistance package, and exchanged views on postwar reconstruction and broader bilateral cooperation.

21 July 2026 ([Yonhap News Agency](#)): South Korea Approves Reform of Military Counterintelligence System

South Korea's Cabinet approved five presidential decrees to dismantle the Defense Counterintelligence Command and redistribute its functions under the Ministry of National Defense. The reforms establish separate organizations for counterintelligence, defence industry intelligence, cybersecurity operations, and internal security investigations, while removing the military's authority to conduct surveillance and personnel intelligence activities. The restructuring follows longstanding criticism of the command's political influence and comes after allegations regarding its involvement in the December 2024 martial law attempt.

24 July 2026 ([Yonhap News Agency](#)): South Korean Navy Conducts First Combat Trial of Humanoid Robot as Ship Helmsman

The Republic of Korea Navy conducted its first combat experiment using a humanoid robot to perform helmsman duties aboard a naval vessel as part of efforts to integrate robotics into military operations. During the trial, the robot, "Pibot," successfully executed steering commands under simulated operational conditions, including navigation in narrow waters, adverse weather, and nighttime environments. The experiment will support the Navy's development of manned-unmanned teaming concepts and help identify tasks that can be automated to address future manpower challenges.

TAIWAN

17 July 2026 ([Taipei Times](#)): Taiwan Conducts Army Aviation Exercise and Expands Military Personnel Reforms

Taiwan's Army Aviation and Training Command conducted a deep-defense exercise involving AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters as part of the Joint Defense Exercises, testing rear-area dispersal, rapid mobility, and operational sustainment under wartime conditions. Separately, the Ministry of National Defense outlined plans to begin a pilot programme outsourcing gate security at nine military academies to private security firms from September 2026. The initiative aims to free military personnel for operational duties while retaining responsibility for sensitive facilities, emergency response, and combat readiness within the armed forces.

22 July 2026 ([Focus Taiwan \(CNA\)](#)): Taiwan Accuses China of Expanding Influence in the South Pacific Through Political Pressure

Taiwan Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung accused China of using "elite capture" to expand its influence in South Pacific countries, citing Papua New Guinea's recent announcement that it would close Taiwan's representative office. Lin stated that Taiwan's office in Papua New Guinea remains operational while the country's cabinet continues reviewing bilateral relations. He also said Taiwan is assessing its liquefied natural gas imports from Papua New Guinea amid the dispute and argued that Beijing is increasing its regional influence through political engagement, infrastructure investment, and expanding military activities in the Pacific.

23 July 2026 ([Focus Taiwan \(CNA\)](#)): Taiwan Watchdog Calls for Air Force Reforms Following Fatal F-16V Crash

Taiwan's Control Yuan directed the Air Force to implement corrective measures following its investigation into the January 2026 crash of an F-16V fighter that killed pilot Hsin Po-yi. The investigation identified shortcomings in nighttime flight risk management, maintenance procedures, and record-keeping, while noting repeated navigation system malfunctions prior to the accident. The watchdog also urged faster implementation of the Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System (Auto GCAS) in cooperation with U.S. modernization partners. The Air Force said it has begun reviewing operational procedures and strengthening flight safety measures.

23 July 2026 ([Focus Taiwan \(CNA\)](#)): Taiwan to Revoke Citizenship of China-Born Woman Convicted Under National Security Act

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council announced that it will revoke the citizenship and household registration of Zhou Manzhi, a China-born woman whose conviction for violating the National Security Act was upheld by the Supreme Court. Zhou was sentenced to eight years in prison for developing organizations in Taiwan on behalf of groups determined by the courts to be under the substantive control of the Chinese Communist Party. Authorities said the decision will be carried out under the Cross-Strait Act on national security grounds, with the ruling expected to influence future investigations involving organizations linked to Beijing.

MONGOLIA

7 July 2026 ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia](#)): Mongolia's New Ambassador to India Presents Credentials

Mongolia's newly appointed Ambassador to India, Luvsanjav Ulziit, presented his credentials to Indian President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi. During the ceremony, the ambassador conveyed greetings from Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh and reaffirmed Mongolia's commitment to further deepening its strategic partnership with India. President Murmu welcomed the appointment, highlighted the successful implementation of bilateral projects, including the Mongolia–India oil refinery project, and expressed confidence that cooperation between the two countries would continue to expand.

11 July 2026 ([Mongolian National Broadcaster](#)): Mongolia and South Korea Issue Joint Declaration to Deepen Strategic Partnership

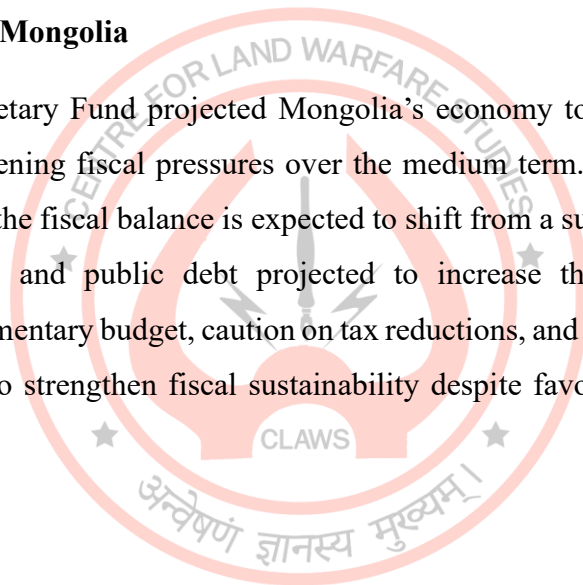
Mongolia and South Korea issued a joint declaration outlining measures to strengthen their strategic partnership across political, security, economic, and technological fields following South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's state visit to Mongolia. The declaration includes plans to expand defence cooperation, conclude a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, increase bilateral trade to US\$1 billion within five years, enhance collaboration on critical minerals, renewable energy, infrastructure, digital technologies, healthcare, and education, and deepen coordination on regional and international issues while promoting greater people-to-people exchanges.

22 July 2026 ([Mongolian National Broadcaster](#)): Mongolia Launches Construction of National Institute for International Studies

Mongolia began construction of the Presidential Institute for International Studies at the National Defense University under an initiative of President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh. The institute is intended to serve as a national research center focused on national security, defence policy, international relations, and regional studies. It will conduct policy research, provide strategic assessments and recommendations to government leaders, and support military science and security studies. Officials described the project as a strategic investment aimed at strengthening Mongolia's research capacity and informing national security and foreign policy decision-making.

22 July 2026 ([Mongolia Weekly](#)): IMF Forecast Warns of Rising Fiscal Pressures Despite Continued Growth in Mongolia

The International Monetary Fund projected Mongolia's economy to grow by 5.8% in 2026 while warning of worsening fiscal pressures over the medium term. According to the IMF's Article IV assessment, the fiscal balance is expected to shift from a surplus in 2025 to a deficit in 2026, with deficits and public debt projected to increase through 2031. The Fund recommended a supplementary budget, caution on tax reductions, and prudent monetary policy, highlighting the need to strengthen fiscal sustainability despite favourable commodity price assumptions.



About the Author

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