

North Korea missile launch likely failed, says South Korea

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Seoul: A North Korean missile launch likely failed on Tuesday, according to South Korea's military, the latest in a string of high-profile failures that tempers somewhat recent worries that Pyongyang was pushing quickly toward its goal of a nuclear-tipped missile that can reach America's mainland.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said in an unsourced report that the missile was a powerful mid-range Musudan, which, if true, would make it the fourth failure by the North to conduct a successful test launch of the new missile, which could potentially reach far-away U.S. military bases in Asia and the Pacific. Seoul defense officials could not immediately confirm the report.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in statement that the North attempted to launch an unidentified missile early in the morning from the Wonsan area, but likely failed. The military is analyzing what happened and had no other details.

Despite recent failures, there has been growing outside worry over North Korea's nuclear and missile activity this year, which includes a nuclear test in January and a long-range rocket test in February that outsiders see as a test of banned long-range missile technology.

The most recent launch follows Seoul's rejection of recent Pyongyang overtures to talk, part of what some analysts see as an attempt by the North to start a dialogue meant to win the impoverished country aid.

In April, North Korea attempted unsuccessfully to launch three suspected powerful intermediate-range Musudan missiles.

Musudan missiles have a potential range of about 3,500 kilometers (2,180 miles), which would put U.S. military bases in Guam within their striking distance. South Korea believes the North does not yet possess a missile capable of hitting the U.S. mainland, but the North is working on that technology.

Before April's suspected launches, North Korea had never flight-tested a Musudan missile, though one was displayed during a military parade in 2010 in Pyongyang.

- AP