

North Korea's latest missile test fails, say US, South Korea

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Seoul: Days after North Korea claimed a major breakthrough in its rocket development program, the US and South Korean militaries today said that Pyongyang's latest missile launch ended in failure on Wednesday.

Representational pic - N Korea's latest missile test fails, say US, South Korea

According to a media report, the missile was believed to have exploded in the air.

A South Korean Defence Ministry official said that North Korea fired one missile near the Wonsan airfield on its eastern coast and it was estimated to have failed.

The reported launch failure comes as the North is angrily reacting to ongoing annual US-South Korean military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

Earlier this month, North Korea fired four ballistic missiles that landed in waters off Japan, triggering strong protests from Seoul and Tokyo.

The US Pacific Command said in a statement that the American military detected what it assessed as a failed North Korean missile launch this morning. It added that the missile appears to have exploded within seconds of launch.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said that it was analysing what type of missile was launched.

Last year, the country suffered a series of embarrassing failed launches of its new medium-range Musudan missile before it successfully test-fired one.

North Korean state media said Sunday that it had conducted a ground test of a new type of high-thrust rocket engine, which it hailed as a breakthrough for the country's space program. Washington, Seoul and others view the North's space program as a cover for its banned long-range missile development program.

North Korea is pushing hard to upgrade its weapons systems to cope with what it calls US hostility. Many weapons experts say the North could have a functioning nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the continental US within a few years. North Korea carried out two nuclear tests last year.

- With Agency Inputs