



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

Digest

October 2024

- Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Nihon Hidankyo
- Japanese lower-house elections result in 'hung parliament'
- Japan, ROK, US start new DPRK sanctions monitor



Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Nihon Hidankyo

On 11 October 2024, the prestigious Swedish Nobel Prize Committee [announced](#) that it had awarded the 2024 edition of the prestigious Peace Prize to the Japan Confederation of Atomic and Hydrogen-Bomb Sufferers Organisations, which is better known by the abbreviation of its Japanese name, Nihon Hidankyo (*Nihon Gensuibaku Higaisha Dantai Kyogikai*). The committee stated in an official press release that its award was in recognition of the organisation's 'efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again'.

At a live press conference, Toshiyuki Mimaki (82), the head of the Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-bomb Sufferers Organizations (which is a member of the Hidankyo), became famous for his bursting-out into tears as the announcement was made. In statements [made](#) after the initial reaction, Mimaki conveyed to the press that he felt the award 'was like a dream' but that he hoped that '(our predecessors) must be rejoicing as well [in the afterlife]'.

Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki welcomed the announcement, with Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui calling the award a 'ray of light' in a 'time of great difficulty', whereas Nagasaki Mayor Shiro Suzuki held out hope for a 'turning point for the world to make a major shift toward realising a world without nuclear weapons'. On 12 October, Terumi Tanaka (92), co-chair of the Hidankyo, [called](#) the organisation's mission 'an issue for all humanity to solve' and urged more debate

on how the movement to abolish nuclear weapons could be strengthened. He also expressed his criticism of Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's [response](#) to the award in a phone call after the announcement, where, he said, the latter stated that he favoured a 'pragmatic response' to the issue of nuclear deterrence given the real threat posed by irresponsible nuclear rhetoric from countries such as North Korea and Russia.

Japanese lower-house elections result in 'hung parliament'

Japan's voters delivered a resounding punishment vote to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) - *Komeito* alliance in the general elections to the House of Representatives held on 27 October 2024. After polls closed, national broadcaster NHK announced that it could no longer see any prospect for the LDP-*Komeito* combine to retain its majority, but the scale of the crash became evident only on the next day. The results conveyed an unprecedented picture, as the LDP lost the majority for only the third time in its seventy-year-long history of ruling Japan. From a high of 259 seats in the 2021 general elections, the LDP under Shigeru Ishiba could only manage a much-shrunken tally of 191, a loss of 69 seats. Traditional ally *Komeito* did not fare any better, going from 32 seats in 2021 to 24 seats in 2024, a loss of 8 seats.

Opposition parties made sizeable gains in the current election. The largest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ) under the leadership of former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, gained a whopping 52 seats from its previous election showing of 96 seats in 2021, ending up as the largest opposition force at 148 seats. The second largest opposition group, the centrist Democratic

Party for the People (DPFP), also gained tremendously, with its tally growing fourfold to 28 seats from a low of 11 in 2021.

Populist parties such as the far-right *Sanseito*, which campaigned on an anti-immigration, anti-China platform, were soundly rejected by voters in direct polling, winning only three seats via proportional representation. Three seats (one directly elected, two via proportional representation) were also bagged by the Conservative Party of Japan (*Hoshuto*), another populist conservative party running on an ultranationalist platform. The biggest loser in the opposition camp was the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), which ended up losing two seats to fall below 10 seats for the first time since 2006. However, the progressive leftwing Reiwa Shinsengumi made significant gains in the election, gaining six more seats in the House of Representatives than 2021's tally of 3.

After the announcement of the results, Prime Minister Ishiba held a press conference where he accepted the results, but refused to step down as prime minister. Instead he issued a call to opposition parties willing to work on a policy-wise basis to support his minority government from the outside, a call widely interpreted to be intended for Yuichiro Tamaki, the leader of the centrist DPFP. On the other hand, the CDPJ also began efforts to secure opposition unity in an attempt to dislodge the LDP-Komeito combine in favour of a broad coalition government under Noda. However, it is difficult to say whether Tamaki of the CDPJ or Toshiyuki Baba of the Japan Innovation Party (*Nippon Ishin no Kai*) would be willing to work with Noda, given significant policy differences between them.

Japan, ROK, US start new DPRK sanctions monitor

At a joint press conference following a meeting between the second-highest-ranked foreign policy officials of Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America on 13 October, the three countries [announced](#) that they have launched a new organisation to replace a United Nations-backed panel that was tasked with monitoring sanctions-evasion programs run by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in violation of several UN Security Council resolutions. The UN panel was forced to cease its activities in March 2024 after Russia vetoed an extension of its mandate.

The new organisation, called the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT), comprises 11 countries including Japan, the ROK and the US, with several European countries such as Britain, France and Germany also participating. The organisation will issue regular reports on sanctions enforcement efforts in continuation with the previous UN panel's role. At the press conference, Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Masataka Okano stated that the participants are fully committed to work with other countries to ensure that the complete range of sanctions on the DPRK is enforced, while ROK First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Hong Kyun highlighted that the organisation would welcome the participation of countries willing to help implement the sanctions regime on the DPRK. ROK officials [interviewed](#) by Reuters accepted the lack of international legitimacy of the new body, but stressed the benefits of being set free from constraints placed on the UN panel by Moscow and Beijing.