

Japan warns of rising global tension

Tokyo bids to boost military capability over threat stemming from Russia invasion

TOKYO: Japan warned of escalating national security threats stemming from Russia's war on Ukraine and China's tensions with Taiwan in an annual defence paper, as Japan tries to bolster its military capability and spending.

The annual defence white paper, approved by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Cabinet yesterday, highlights the need for Japan's military buildup to address security concerns and seeks to gain public support for a stronger military and increased budget, which Kishida's governing party aims to double in coming years.

The report comes months ahead of a revision to Japan's national security strategy that is expected to include a pre-emptive strike capa-

bility, which critics say would go beyond the limitations of Japan's pacifist constitution.

China, Russia and North Korea top Japan's security concerns in the 500-page report.

Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, in a statement in the report, said the Indo-Pacific region is "at the centre" of international strategic competition.

The report calls Russia's war on Ukraine a "serious violation of international law" and raises "concerns that the effects of such unilateral changes to the status quo by force may extend to the Indo-Pacific region".

Strategic competition between states has intensified amid a changing global power balance and is

"further complicated by factors such as China's broad and rapid military buildup," the report said.

The paper doubled its contents on Taiwan from a previous edition last year.

It raised concerns over Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its impact on Asia, possibly setting a precedent for what may happen between China and Taiwan.

The report noted growing tension between Washington and Beijing over Taiwan, as the US continues to send warships through the Taiwan Strait and sell arms to Taipei, while Chinese warplanes have increasingly entered Taiwanese airspace.

China claims self-governing Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

Tokyo is also concerned about China's "relentless" unilateral attempts to change the status quo "by coercion" near the Japanese-controlled East China Sea island it calls Senkaku, which Beijing also claims and calls the Diaoyu.

China aims to build a "world-class military" and has been ramping up the fusion of military and civilian resources, the report said.

In response, China said yesterday it firmly opposed Japan's new defence white paper and had sent stern representations to Tokyo.

"Japan's new defence white paper makes accusations and smears China's defence policy, market economic development and legitimate maritime activities," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang

Wenbin told a daily news briefing.

He said the report "exaggerates the so-called China threat" and interferes in China's internal affairs on Taiwan.

"China has expressed its strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition to this, and has lodged stern representations to the Japanese side about this," he said.

Wang noted that the defence white paper mentioned Tokyo's plan to increase Japan's defence budget and develop its counter-strike capabilities.

"We urge Japan to immediately stop the erroneous practice of exaggerating security threats in its neighbourhood and finding excuses for its own strong military arsenal," he added. — Agencies