South Korea test-flies its first domestically developed hypersonic weapon

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News

South Korea flight-tested its first indigenous hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV), developed by the Agency for Defense Development (ADD), on 8 Oct 2026; President Lee Jae-myung watched the test. It adds the ability to strike key targets on the Korean Peninsula; the presidential office called it a 'key strategic asset capable of changing the course of the battlefield'. The President also inspected the high-yield 'Hyunmoo-5' missile.

Key facts

Weapon	Hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) – South Korea's first indigenous one
Developer	Agency for Defense Development (ADD)
Date	8 Oct 2026; observed by President Lee Jae-myung
Speed	Hypersonic – over five times the speed of sound (Mach 5+)
Context	Lee pledges to take back wartime operational control (OPCON) from the US within his term (to 2030)

Background

- Science: hypersonic means above Mach 5 (sound travels about 343 m/s at sea level). An HGV is boosted by a rocket and then glides through the atmosphere; because it can manoeuvre, air defences find it hard to intercept. Hypersonic cruise missiles use 'scramjet' engines.
- India: DRDO's long-range hypersonic missile was tested on 16 Nov 2024 from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha; the HSTDV scramjet test was in 2020; BrahMos (India–Russia) is a supersonic cruise missile.
- Others: Russia (Avangard, Kinzhal) and China (DF-17) have deployed hypersonic weapons; the US is developing 'Dark Eagle'; North Korea also claims hypersonic tests.
- Korea: the 1950–53 Korean War ended in an armistice; the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) near the 38th parallel divides the two Koreas. South Korea's capital is Seoul.

Tamil Nadu link: Rameswaram-born Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, 'India's Missile Man', led the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP, 1983); Odisha's Wheeler Island was renamed 'Abdul Kalam Island' in 2015. South Korea's Hyundai has made cars at Irungattukottai near Sriperumbudur since 1998.

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