

# Korea Chair Bulletin

## INDIA - SOUTH KOREA

### India-South Korea Diplomatic Momentum: Jaishankar's First Call with New FM Cho Hyun

On July 28, 2025, EAM S. Jaishankar held his inaugural telephonic conversation with South Korea's newly appointed Foreign Minister, Cho Hyun, offering "best wishes for a successful tenure" and discussing the need to deepen bilateral cooperation between the two nations. In response, Cho reaffirmed commitments made during the G7 Summit and the recent special envoy visit, with both sides agreeing to step up high-level exchanges and practical collaboration.

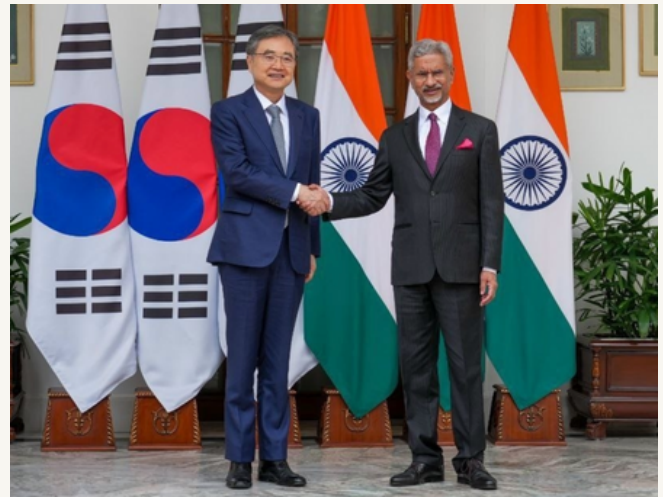
[Read more](#)

### India Denies Interest in South Korea's KF-21 Boromae Fighter Jet

In a move clarifying its defense priorities, India has officially stated that it is not evaluating the South Korean KF-21 Boromae fighter jet as part of its multi-role aircraft modernization efforts. The Indian MoD and the Air Force reiterated they have neither received any formal offers nor initiated discussions regarding the jet, dismissing recent speculation about New Delhi's interest in the platform. This clarification comes amid broader debate over India's urgent need to modernize its aging fleet—including jets like the MiG-21 and Jaguar—and ongoing challenges in indigenous programs such as the AMCA. [Read more](#)

### India and South Korea Bolster Maritime Security Ties

A Korea Coast Guard delegation led by Commissioner General Kim Yong Jin visited India from 20–24 July to participate in the 13th High-Level Meeting between the Korea Coast Guard and the Indian Coast Guard. The talks, held in New Delhi, focused on enhancing cooperation in maritime safety, search and rescue operations, environmental protection, and information sharing to combat transnational maritime crimes. Both sides agreed to deepen operational coordination, conduct more joint exercises, and explore avenues for capacity building. [Read more](#)



### Visit of South Korea's Foreign Minister Marks 10 Years of Strategic Partnership with India

On August 16, 2025, South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun visited India. The visit commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Special Strategic Partnership between the two nations. During the meeting, the leaders discussed ways to enhance cooperation across trade, defense, artificial intelligence, clean energy, and people-to-people exchanges. They also exchanged views on Indo-Pacific regional developments and global issues, reaffirming their commitment to deepen bilateral ties and collaboration. [Read more](#)

### India Showcases Buddhist Heritage at Busan International Buddhism Expo

The 2nd Busan International Buddhism Expo kicked off on August 7, 2025, at BEXCO in Busan, running through August 10, under the theme "Buddhism Core". The Uttar Pradesh Tourism pavilion has become a vibrant cultural hub, featuring symbolic offerings like "Buddha Rice," engaging storytelling of sacred sites like Sarnath and Kushinagar, and fostering plans for Korean pilgrimage delegations in October and November. The initiative reinforces deep Indo-Korean ties rooted in shared Buddhist traditions. [Read more](#)



# TOP NEWS FROM THE KOREAN PENINSULA

## South Korea Granted MFN (Most Favoured Nation) Status in U.S. Chip Tariff Deal

South Korea has secured MFN treatment for its semiconductor sector under a newly struck trade agreement with the United States. Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo confirmed that Korean chipmakers—including Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix—will be subject only to standard MFN tariff rates, potentially around 15%, rather than facing the punitive 100% tariffs earlier proposed by President Trump. This arrangement comes as part of a broader trade package, which includes a US\$350 billion investment pledge from South Korea and a US\$100 billion energy import commitment. The favorable tariff terms have generated optimism across sectors: it not only shields key Korean exports but also provides a more predictable trading environment amid a global surge in protectionist measures.

[Read more](#)

## South Korea's Alliance Role Key to Indo-Pacific Deterrence, U.S. Says

At an event hosted by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, John Noh, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, emphasized that South Korea's contributions through its alliance with the United States are "critical" to restoring deterrence across the Indo-Pacific. Stressing that South Korea's military remains among the most capable globally, Noh highlighted the country's economic strength, technological prowess, and democratic resilience as pivotal to regional stability since the Korean War. [Read more](#)

## Unification Ministry Recommits to Resolution of Abduction Cases

On August 8, 2025, South Korea's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young reaffirmed his ministry's dedication to addressing the plight of South Koreans abducted by North Korea. During a meeting with families of abductees, he pledged sustained efforts to resolve the issue—even as details of any concrete measures remain limited. [Read more](#)

## Lee Proposes Wartime OPCON Transfer to South Korea by 2030

President Lee's administration has placed the transfer OPCON from the United States to South Korea as a key national security priority. Announced on August 13, 2025, the plan aims to establish and implement a roadmap for OPCON transfer within Lee's term, strengthening South Korea's command capabilities to deter North Korean threats while maintaining close coordination with the US. [Read more](#)



## Pakistani Member of Lashkar-e-Taiba Arrested While Working in Seoul's Itaewon

South Korean police arrested a Pakistani man in his 40s working as a market clerk in Itaewon, Seoul, on August 2, 2025, for membership in Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the terrorist group behind the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The suspect joined LeT in 2020, trained in weapons and infiltration tactics, and entered South Korea in December 2023 using a business visa obtained by posing as a businessman. While not accused of planning attacks in South Korea, his LeT affiliation violates the country's counter-terrorism law. Authorities are investigating if he money-transferred to LeT. This is the first arrest in Korea of a UN-designated terrorist group member. LeT is linked to Al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden, responsible for terrorist acts including the deadly Pahalgam attack in 2025 and the Mumbai attacks in 2008. [Read more](#)



## SECURITY



### Seoul and Tokyo Reaffirm Security Ties in First Call Between Defense Chiefs

On August 7, 2025, South Korea's Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back and Japanese Defense Minister Gen. Nakatani held their first phone conversation since Ahn assumed office. Both leaders emphasized the importance of deepening defense ties and committed to holding an in-person meeting soon for more substantive discussions. Their dialogue also highlights the significance of this year, marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic normalization between the two nations. [Read more](#)



### North Korea Boosted Loudspeaker Numbers in May–June Despite No Broadcast Yet

Between May and June 2025, North Korea increased the number of loudspeakers aimed at South Korea in frontline areas. However, according to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), none of these newly installed speakers are currently active. This development came even as South Korea had ceased its own broadcasts on June 11 and dismantled about 20 of its border loudspeakers earlier in August—a move aimed at de-escalating tensions.

[Read more](#)

### Seoul and Washington Craft Joint Peace Proposal Ahead of Summit

South Korea's Unification Ministry is collaborating with U.S. counterparts to draft a joint proposal aimed at fostering peace on the Korean Peninsula. This initiative is slated to be presented at the upcoming summit between President Lee Jae-myung and U.S. President Donald Trump. Deputy Spokesperson Chang Yoon-jeong emphasized that both nations share a commitment to resuming dialogue with North Korea and addressing its nuclear challenges through peaceful means. [Read more](#)

### South Korea–U.S. Begin Major Summer Military Drills Amid Tension Talks

South Korea and the United States will initiate their annual Ulchi Freedom Shield joint military exercise from August 18 to 28. The 11-day operation combines command post simulations with field training to bolster regional readiness, particularly against rising threats from North Korea, including missile and nuclear scenarios and advanced warfare threats like drones, GPS jamming, and cyberattacks. Notably, roughly 20 of the 40 planned field exercises have been postponed to September to mitigate extreme summer heat and help maintain a balanced year-round defense posture. [Read More](#)

### North Korea Asserts Right to Military Space Reconnaissance

Leadership, particularly Kim Jong Un, has characterized recent spy satellite endeavors as vital to national self-defense—signaling that Pyongyang will “never give up” its space program despite past setbacks. Meanwhile, internal legal reforms have reframed the country's space law to explicitly emphasize defense, replacing earlier language that favored peaceful scientific progress. These assertions come amid extensive upgrades at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station—including a new maritime pier to support larger components—highlighting the regime's determination to expand its satellite capabilities in cooperation with Russia. [Read more](#)



## SCI-FI/ENVIRONMENT/INVESTMENT/SOCIETY

### S. Korea again postpones decision on Google's map data transfer request amid US pressure

South Korea has once again postponed its decision regarding Google's long-standing request to export high-precision digital maps to overseas servers—a move that would significantly enhance navigation features like routing and walking directions on Google Maps within Korea. The delay reflects continued national security concerns, particularly about sensitive infrastructure being exposed through detailed map data. [Read more](#)

### South Korea's Workforce Trends Toward Aging: Less Than a Third Are Under-30

For the first time on record, South Korea's workforce composition has shifted noticeably: employees aged 50 and over now outnumber those under 30. This stark milestone highlights the rapid aging of talent within some of the country's largest firms—raising concerns about long-term competitiveness, innovation, and the sustainability of corporate growth. [Read more](#)

### Deadly Tick-Borne Virus Spreads Rapidly in Korea

South Korea is facing a sharp rise in ticks infected with the Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (SFTS) virus, which has a case-fatality rate ranging from 12% to as high as 47% in individual cases—placing it among the most lethal infectious diseases. From April to November 2024, tick density increased significantly: the average number captured per trap rose to 46.8, up 30% from 36.0 in 2023 and 13.9% above the 2020–2022 mean. These ticks—particularly the *Haemaphysalis longicornis* species—are most active in August and September, often found in grave sites, grassy fields, scrublands, and mountain trails. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) is urging the public to take serious precautions when outdoors: wear protective clothing, use insect repellents, and remain vigilant in high-risk environments. [Read More](#)

### South Korea Forms AI Task Force to Build Next-Gen Smart Power Grid

The government has launched a new task force charged with designing a next-generation power grid powered by artificial intelligence. The initiative aims to enable more effective integration of renewable energy into the national grid—optimizing supply without necessitating massive new infrastructure projects. This effort underscores Seoul's commitment to energy transformation and smart infrastructure development. [Read more](#)



### Auto Tariff Timeline in Limbo, Korean Carmakers Raise Concerns

South Korea's major automakers, including Hyundai and Kia, remain anxious as the precise timeline for the promised reduction in U.S. auto tariffs—from the current 25% to a proposed 15%—remains undecided. The delay exacerbates competitive pressures, particularly as Japanese and European rivals may soon benefit from their own tariff reductions. Meanwhile, the South Korean government is mobilizing to mitigate the broader economic fallout from elevated U.S. tariffs. It has announced a task force aimed at helping affected sectors—particularly auto and parts manufacturers—adapt to shifting trade conditions. A \$350 billion investment package and regulatory reforms in high-tech fields are also being considered to bolster resilience. [Read more](#)



## 10 MOST READ ARTICLES

**Reuters**, in [South Korea's Lee to end some military activity on border with North](#), highlights President Lee Jae Myung's August 15, 2025, announcement that South Korea will cease certain military operations along the North Korean border to reduce tensions and restore the 2018 military pact.

**CNN**, in [Kim Jong Un's powerful sister turns up the volume on loudspeakers](#), covers North Korea's recent moves regarding border loudspeakers and propaganda, signifying tactical shifts, but notes Pyongyang's increased focus on relations with Russia.

**Nippon.com**, in [S. Korea Pres. Seeks Deeper Ties with Japan in Liberation Day Address](#), reports on President Lee Jae-myung's August 15 address advocating for enhanced diplomatic engagement and partnership with Japan, aligning with the anniversary of Korea's liberation.

**CNN**, in [As South Korea's population falls, its Military is Shrinking](#), details how a declining birth rate has reduced South Korea's troop numbers by 20% over the past six years, raising concerns about military readiness as regional threats persist.

**Stars and Stripes**, in [Extreme heat forces US, South Korea to postpone half of large-scale military exercise](#), explains that the Ulchi Freedom Shield joint drills were scaled back in August due to severe heat, prioritizing troop safety while maintaining readiness.

**Security Council Report**, in [DPRK \(North Korea\), August 2025 Monthly Forecast, notes that North Korea conducted multiple ballistic missile launches \(May, June\)](#), coinciding with increased trilateral security exercises among South Korea, the US, and Japan.

**IP Defense Forum**, in [North Korea expected to send military construction workers to Russia](#), describes intelligence reports that Pyongyang plans to send thousands of military workers to aid Russia in the Kursk region, expanding defense cooperation.

**38 North**, in [North Korea Continues to Improve Nuclear Posture, analyzes North Korea's ongoing enhancement of its nuclear deterrence posture and command capabilities](#), asserting its retaliatory credibility amid global tensions.

**Anadolu Agency**, in [South Korea seeks to reclaim operational control of military from US](#), reports that President Lee Jae Myung's administration is pursuing the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) of South Korean forces from the US to Seoul, a move that would mark a major milestone in the alliance.

**IP Defense Forum**, in [Japan, South Korea, U.S. pledge to strengthen security cooperation](#), details a July 2025 Seoul summit of military chiefs from Japan, South Korea, and the US, who reaffirmed their determination to counter North Korea's nuclear and missile threats through expanded trilateral exercises and technology sharing.



*The Korea Chair Bulletin provides research-driven insights into India-South Korea relations, covering policy shifts, strategic dialogues, and emerging trends. It also highlights key developments and news from the Korean Peninsula.*

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*The Republic of Korea Chair at CSDR aims to enhance the understanding and cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea through research and policy engagement. Launched in Jan 2025, with a grant from the Korea Foundation, the Chair intends to create broader awareness and in-depth understanding of the India-ROK relationship, which remains limited despite growing governmental engagement.*

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