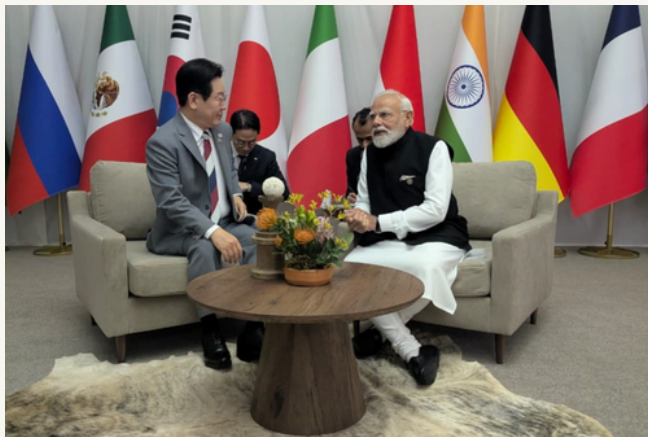


Korea Chair Bulletin

INDIA - SOUTH KOREA

India-South Korea Relations Gain Momentum Across Trade, Culture and Strategic Trust

India-South Korea ties have strengthened across diplomacy, trade and people-to-people exchanges during the tenure of outgoing Deputy Chief of Mission Sang-woo Lim. Reflecting on key milestones such as the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations and India's G20 presidency, Lim highlighted expanding cultural engagement and economic cooperation. He noted that the current global environment presents a timely opportunity to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and deepen collaboration in strategic sectors including semiconductors, shipbuilding and defence. [Read more](#)



India-South Korea Ties Enter New Phase After Modi-Lee Meeting at G20

India-South Korea relations gained fresh momentum after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Lee Jae-myung on the sidelines of the G20 Summit. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deepen the Special Strategic Partnership, with emphasis on trade, investment, advanced technologies, defence, and people-to-people ties. Marking ten years of the partnership, both sides agreed to translate high-level engagement into concrete cooperation across economic and strategic sectors. [Read more](#)

HD Hyundai Signs MoU with Tamil Nadu to Establish New Shipyard in India

South Korea's HD Hyundai has signed a strategic agreement with the Tamil Nadu government to explore the establishment of a new shipyard in India, strengthening bilateral cooperation in maritime manufacturing. Citing favourable climate conditions and planned port investments, Tamil Nadu has been identified as an optimal site. HD Hyundai will also partner with state-owned BEML to localise port crane manufacturing, aligning with India's Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and expanding Korea's industrial footprint in India. [Read more](#)

Korea-India Partnership Essential Amid Global Turbulence: Foreign Minister Cho Hyun

Addressing the 24th Korea-India Strategic Dialogue, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun highlighted India's growing global role and called Korea-India cooperation essential amid geopolitical turbulence. He stressed complementary economic strengths, deeper collaboration in technology and innovation, shared democratic values, and expanding cultural ties. Cho also underscored growing defence and security cooperation, including joint production and naval exercises, noting that strategic trust between the two countries has reached a new level. [Read more](#)

Punjab CM Invites Korean Firms to Invest in Renewable Energy and Infrastructure

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann visited Seoul on December 8-9 to pitch Punjab as a key investment destination, inviting leading Korean firms to collaborate in renewable energy, infrastructure, food processing, display technologies, and startups. Holding meetings with companies such as Daewoo E&C, GS E&C, Nongshim, KDIA, and the Seoul Business Agency, Mann highlighted Punjab's investor-friendly reforms, green energy ambitions, and innovation ecosystem, ahead of the Progressive Punjab Investors' Summit 2026. [Read more](#)



TOP NEWS FROM THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Trump-Kim Summit Likely in 2026, Inter-Korean Dialogue Remains Stalled

A U.S.-North Korea summit in 2026 is increasingly likely, potentially facilitated by President Trump's April China visit and discussions on sanctions relief and the Ukraine war. South Korea's phased denuclearization roadmap could offer a realistic framework for negotiations. However, inter-Korean dialogue is expected to remain stalled, as North Korea deepens ties with China and Russia, seeing limited strategic or economic benefit from engaging Seoul amid the emerging Eurasian "new Cold War" dynamics. [Read more](#)

North Korea Slams Japan's Possible Shift on Non-Nuclear Principles as Threat to Regional Peace

North Korea has condemned Japan's possible reconsideration of its non-nuclear three principles, calling it an "open challenge to peace." In an article published by Rodong Sinmun, Pyongyang accused the Takaichi Cabinet of exploiting regional threats to justify military expansion, constitutional revision, and overseas deployment. The commentary drew parallels with Japan's wartime aggression, warning that moves toward hosting U.S. nuclear weapons undermine regional stability and risk repeating historical mistakes under the guise of security. [Read more](#)

Trump Signs NDAA Blocking Unilateral USFK Troop Cuts

U.S. President Donald Trump has signed the fiscal year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, which restricts any unilateral reduction of the 28,500-strong U.S. Forces Korea. The law prevents funding for troop cuts unless the move is certified as being in the U.S. national security interest and undertaken after consultations with allies, including South Korea. It also places limits on changes to the wartime operational control transfer, reaffirming long-standing alliance commitments. [Read more](#)



South Korea Emerges as Budget-Friendly Choice for Chinese Tourists

South Korea is becoming an attractive travel destination for Chinese tourists as visits to Japan decline amid diplomatic tensions. A sharply weakening Korean won has made travel, shopping and beauty treatments in South Korea significantly cheaper for price-sensitive Chinese travellers. With visa-free travel easing, warming China-Korea ties and strong K-pop and beauty appeal, South Korea has overtaken Japan in Chinese flight bookings, drawing millions of visitors in 2025. [Read more](#)

President Lee Moves to Resolve Cabinet Tensions Over North Korea Policy

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has intervened to ease tensions between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Unification over leadership on North Korea policy. Speaking at a joint policy briefing, Lee stressed that easing inter-Korean hostilities should be led by the Unification Ministry through a patient, proactive approach. Warning that deepening confrontation carries economic costs, he called for dialogue and peaceful coexistence despite growing challenges in relations with Pyongyang. [Read more](#)



SECURITY/NORTH KOREA

South Korea to Forgo Defense White Paper for Second Consecutive Year

South Korea will skip publishing its defense white paper for the second consecutive year due to uncertainty following last year's martial law declaration and a change in administration. The Defense Ministry cited the need to ensure policy continuity and effective communication. Originally scheduled for December 2024, the release was postponed, and the new Lee Jae Myung administration's shift in defense and North Korea policy has further delayed publication.

[Read more](#)

South Korea Accelerates AI Integration in Next-Generation Weapons

South Korea is rapidly advancing the integration of artificial intelligence into its defense sector, signaling a shift toward algorithm-driven warfare. The Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) has reorganized a key unit to lead AI strategy for next-generation weapons, including unmanned systems, battlefield awareness, and autonomous targeting. This move aligns with global trends observed in recent conflicts, where AI-enabled systems have reshaped military operations. [Read more](#)

North Korea Faces Rare Demographic Crisis Amid Poverty

North Korea is experiencing a sharp decline in birth rates despite its persistent poverty, creating a rare demographic challenge. Fertility rates are estimated at 1.6–1.8 children per woman, below replacement level, resembling trends in wealthier East Asian nations rather than low-income states. Delayed marriages, rising cohabitation, widespread contraceptive use, and access to outside information contribute to the decline. The regime has intensified pronatalist campaigns, but experts warn reversing low fertility will be extremely difficult. [Read more](#)

North Korean Troops Cross Inter-Korean Border 10 Times in November

North Korean soldiers crossed the inter-Korean land border 10 times in November, mainly in Goseong, Yeoncheon, and Hwacheon, during construction activities near the military demarcation line (MDL). South Korea responded with warning messages and occasional warning shots, prompting North Korean troops to retreat. These intrusions follow North Korea's ongoing border fortification efforts and its "two states hostile to each other" stance. Seoul has proposed military talks to clarify the MDL, but Pyongyang has remained unresponsive.

[Read More](#)



S. Korea Strengthens Space Surveillance with Fifth Military Reconnaissance Satellite

South Korea successfully launched its fifth military reconnaissance satellite, completing the 425 Project and establishing an independent, space-based surveillance network. The satellite enables all-weather, high-resolution monitoring of North Korea, supporting the Kill Chain preemptive strike system and the country's three-axis defense strategy. With this milestone, Seoul reduces reliance on U.S. satellite imagery, enhances strategic autonomy, and plans to expand domestic launch capabilities, miniaturized satellite constellations, and civilian-military space defense integration. [Read more](#)



SCI-FI/ENVIRONMENT/INVESTMENT/SOCIETY

240,000 Coupang Users File Lawsuit Over Massive Data Breach

Nearly 240,000 victims of a major data breach at South Korean e-commerce giant Coupang have filed a compensation lawsuit at the Seoul Central District Court. The plaintiffs are seeking 100,000 won each in damages, with plans to raise the claim to 300,000 won per person. The breach reportedly exposed personal data of around 33 million users. Victims cited dissatisfaction with Coupang's response, as parallel class-action suits continue in the United States. [Read More](#)

Space Startup Delays Launch of Korea's First Commercial Rocket

Korean space startup Innospace has postponed the launch of Hanbit-Nano, the country's first commercial space rocket, after identifying a technical issue during final preparations in Brazil. Engineers found a valve in the second-stage liquid methane system requiring further inspection, prompting the delay. This marks the rocket's third postponement since November. Innospace said a new launch date will be set within the January 16–22 window in coordination with the Brazilian Air Force, noting that such delays are common in the space industry. [Read more](#)

K-beauty's Shift to Smart Devices Signals New AI-Driven Competition

Korea's beauty industry is rapidly moving beyond cosmetics as high-tech skincare devices fuel a new wave of growth and competition. Exports of at-home beauty devices have surged, led by firms like APR, Amorepacific and LG H&H, which are integrating hardware, software and data into personalized skincare ecosystems. As devices become smarter and more connected, industry insiders say K-beauty's future advantage will lie less in products alone and more in algorithms, AI and consumer data. [Read more](#)



South Korea Revises Textbooks to Present Africa as Partner, Not Stereotype

South Korea will revise elementary social studies textbooks to reduce negative portrayals of Africa following campaigns by a civic group. References emphasizing poverty, famine and refugees will be scaled back, while new editions will highlight Africa's economic potential, technological growth and cooperation with Korea. The changes, approved by the Education Ministry, aim to counter stereotypes and encourage students to view Africa as an equal partner in global development. [Read more](#)



South Korea to End Free Disposable Plastic Cups Under New Waste-Curbing Policy

South Korea plans to ban the free distribution of disposable plastic cups as part of a broader plastic reduction roadmap set for release early next year. Cafes and businesses will be required to charge customers, with prices likely ranging from 100 to 200 won to discourage excessive use. The policy reflects a shift away from the stalled cup deposit system and aims to reduce plastic waste while easing burdens on small businesses. [Read more](#)



10 MOST READ ARTICLES

Korea Herald in *North Korea may already possess 150 nuclear warheads, could reach 400 by 2040* highlights a think-tank estimate that Pyongyang's arsenal is larger and growing faster than previously believed.

Korea Herald in *Seoul to raise defence spending as allies map out alliance modernisation* notes Seoul's plans to boost defence budgets and modernise the ROK-US alliance posture amid evolving threats.

Korean Herald in *Allies accelerate OPCON transition with 2nd-phase test next year* reports the allies' decision to push a second-phase OPCON readiness assessment next year as part of alliance modernization.

Reuters in *South Korea's nuclear-powered submarine plan raises regional questions* outlines Seoul's roadmap to develop nuclear-powered subs (with U.S. cooperation sought for fuel and technical talks).

Korea Times in *Trump signs annual defense policy bill restricting USFK troop reduction* records senior military assessments that Seoul and Washington have advanced practical steps toward Seoul's wartime control.

Reuters in *North Korea fires ballistic missile towards the sea off its east coast* surveys recent launches and Pyongyang's weapons messaging that complicate regional dialogue.

Korea Herald in *Lee warns 'unrealistic' nuclear armament debate risks policy focus* reports President Lee's caution that talk of nuclear armament could hamper Seoul's push for fuel cycle rights and sober policymaking.

Korea Times in *Defense ministry seeks talks with US on nuclear-powered sub fuel, aiming to conclude in 2 years* outlines Seoul's plan to open technical and safety discussions with Washington to secure reactor fuel arrangements and a timeline.

Korea Herald in *S. Korea bolsters space surveillance with 5th satellite launch* notes progress on space-based surveillance and surveillance assets that strengthen early-warning and ISR for peninsula defence.

NK News in *South Korea, US report 'meaningful progress' toward wartime OPCON transfer* records senior military assessments that Seoul and Washington have advanced practical steps toward Seoul's wartime control.



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.

Korea Chair Bulletin

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.

Prof. C Raja Mohan - Distinguished Fellow & ROK Chair, CSDR

Torunika Roy - Research Assistant, ROK Chair, CSDR



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