

Korea Chair Bulletin

INDIA - SOUTH KOREA

ROK Warship Makes Port Call at Mumbai

The ROK Navy destroyer Dae Jo Yeong made a port call at Mumbai from March 18–21, 2026. The visit reflects growing maritime engagement between the two navies, following their inaugural bilateral naval exercise in October 2025 and Korea's participation in India's International Fleet Review in Visakhapatnam in February 2026. [Read more](#)

POSCO & JSW Steel Seal \$7.3 Billion Odisha Mill Deal

POSCO and JSW Steel signed an MoU for a \$7.3 billion investment to build a joint venture integrated steel mill in Odisha. Once completed in 2031, the facility will have an annual production capacity of 6 million tons, marking a milestone in Korea's supply chain diversification and India's industrial ambitions.

[Read more](#)



Modi–Lee Summit Marks Historic Turning Point

Indian PM Narendra Modi and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung held a high-level summit in New Delhi, strengthening their Special Strategic Partnership and announcing 25 key outcomes spanning trade, technology, defence, and global governance. President Lee's visit — the first by a South Korean president to India in eight years — signals a major reset in bilateral relations. [Read more](#)



India–Korea Digital Bridge Launched: Chips to Ships

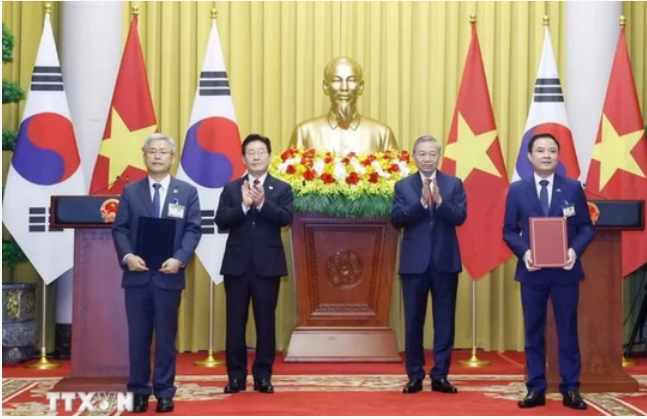
PM Modi and President Lee announced the "India-Korea Digital Bridge" as a long-term framework for collaboration in AI, semiconductors, and IT. Modi encapsulated the vision as "from chips to ships, talent to technology, entertainment to energy." NPCI International also signed an MoU with Korea's Financial Telecommunications & Clearings Institute, signalling deeper integration of digital payments. [Read more](#)

\$50 Billion Trade Target Reaffirmed, CEPA Upgrade on the Table

Both leaders oversaw the signing of around 15 key pacts across AI, energy, shipbuilding, semiconductors, and trade, and agreed to upgrade their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to strengthen supply chains. Bilateral trade currently stands at \$26.89 billion — just over half the \$50 billion target set for 2030. [Read more](#)



TOP NEWS FROM THE KOREAN PENINSULA



Lee Visits Vietnam, Signs 12 Deals Including Nuclear Power

President Lee visited Hanoi for a four-day state visit, where Vietnam's President To Lam announced a dozen cooperative agreements including on tech innovation and nuclear power plant development. South Korea is Vietnam's biggest source of foreign investment, with two-way trade topping \$90 billion in 2025. Among the key deals were agreements between Petrovietnam and Korea Electric Power Corporation on nuclear power development and financing. [Read more](#)



Lee Expresses Regret Over Drone Incursion; Pyongyang Responds Warmly

President Lee expressed regret to Pyongyang for unnecessary military tensions caused by drone incursions into North Korean airspace, which he said were carried out by civilians — including a National Intelligence Service employee and an active-duty military official — acting against government policy. Kim Jong Un's sister Kim Yo Jong called Lee's apology "a manifestation of a frank and broad-minded man's attitude" — a rare conciliatory signal from Pyongyang. [Read more](#)

South Korea Diversifies Oil Imports to Cut Middle East Dependence

South Korea has secured 74.6 million barrels of crude oil for May, diversifying supplies amid Middle East tensions. The move reduces dependence on the region from 69 percent to 56 percent, with imports sourced from the Americas, Africa and beyond. Officials said alternative routes bypass the Strait of Hormuz and rising US imports will help prevent supply disruptions and stabilise energy security. Government and firms coordinated swiftly to secure volumes. [Read more](#)

North Korea Ramps Up Missiles as IAEA Sounds Nuclear Alarm

North Korea launched multiple short-range ballistic missiles from its Sinpo area on April 19, the latest in a sustained run of weapons tests. The previous week, Kim Jong Un personally supervised missile tests from the country's destroyer. Days earlier, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi confirmed "a rapid increase" in activities at North Korea's nuclear manufacturing facilities, describing it as a "very serious increase" in nuclear weapons production capabilities. [Read more](#)



North Korea Confirms Third Uranium Enrichment Site

South Korea's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young publicly identified Kusong as North Korea's third confirmed uranium enrichment facility on March 6, housing missile component factories, uranium mines, and a detonator production factory. CSIS satellite imagery published April 13 showed North Korea has also nearly completed a new building at the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center approaching operational readiness. [Read more](#)



SECURITY/NORTH KOREA

Korea, Canada Launch First High-Tech Joint Military Drills

South Korea and Canada have launched their first joint high-tech military drills at the Korea Combat Training Center in Inje. The 11-day exercise involves advanced combat simulations and troops from both sides, including Canada's Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The drills coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong, reflecting efforts to deepen bilateral defence and strategic cooperation. [Read more](#)



North Korean Hackers Target Apple Devices; Two US Nationals Jailed

A North Korea-affiliated hacking group implemented malware into a globally used open-source program on March 31. In April, Microsoft reported a new phishing campaign by the group "Sapphire Sleet" targeting Apple macOS computers. The US Justice Department sentenced two US nationals to nearly ten years in prison each on April 15 for helping North Korean cyber operations, having stolen the identities of at least 80 Americans to secure fraudulent employment at US companies — generating roughly \$5 million for Pyongyang. [Read More](#)

Pilot Selfie Blamed for \$135 Million Fighter Jet Collision

A 2021 midair collision between two F-15K fighter jets in South Korea was caused by a pilot attempting to film himself, a state audit revealed. The unplanned maneuver led to a crash causing \$135 million in damage. While both aircraft landed safely, the pilot was penalised, and authorities admitted broader institutional responsibility, pledging reforms to improve safety and discipline. [Read more](#)

North Korea Reaffirms Stronger Russia Ties on Summit Anniversary

A senior diplomat from North Korea has reaffirmed deepening ties with Russia, marking seven years since the 2019 summit between Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok. Pyongyang highlighted growing military and strategic cooperation, including a 2024 partnership treaty and reported troop support for Russia's war in Ukraine. [Read more](#)



North Korea's New Destroyer Choe Hyon Fires Cruise Missiles

Kim Jong Un supervised the launch of sea-to-surface "strategic cruise missiles" from North Korea's new 5,000-tonne destroyer Choe Hyon on March 4, describing it as a "new symbol of sea defence" and calling for two destroyers to be built annually. A further dual-strike drill on April 12 combined strategic cruise missiles and anti-ship weapons, testing the destroyer's integrated fire control and command systems. [Read more](#)



SCI-FI/ENVIRONMENT/INVESTMENT/SOCIETY



Macron Visits Seoul; Korea and France Eye AI and Nuclear Alliance

French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Seoul for a two-day state visit, with an agenda covering advanced technologies, clean energy, nuclear cooperation, and space. President Lee called for relations to move beyond traditional partnership into strategic collaboration, particularly in artificial intelligence and nuclear energy, saying such cooperation between democratic nations has become "strategically essential" amid global fragmentation. [Read more](#)



Hyundai Motor to Invest \$5.9 Billion in Seoul AI Research Hub

Hyundai Motor Group will invest 8 trillion won (\$5.9 billion) to build an AI and software R&D complex in Seoul's Songpa district by 2030. Backed by key affiliates, the hub aims to centralise research talent and boost capabilities in autonomous driving and software-defined vehicles, strengthening competitiveness against global players like Tesla. [Read more](#)

South Korea's Aging Crisis Reaches Policy Tipping Point

A Carnegie Endowment report published in March warns that South Korea faces three interconnected governance pressures from super-aging: surging care demands, labor shortages requiring longer working lives, and growing isolation among the elderly. The government has invested \$197.5 billion since 2006 on policies to increase birth rates, but demographic reversal strategies have shown limited effectiveness as workforce contraction accelerates. [Read more](#)

HD Hyundai Expands India Push with Shipyard Joint Venture

HD Hyundai has signed an agreement in New Delhi to establish a joint venture shipyard in India. Partnering with NSHIP TN and Sagarmala Finance, the project includes building infrastructure, training local workers and deploying AI-driven shipbuilding technologies. The move marks a shift toward implementation in bilateral cooperation and aims to expand global orders and supply chains. [Read more](#)



Samsung Union Rallies as Bonus Dispute Fuels Strike Threat

Samsung Electronics workers staged a mass rally in Pyeongtaek, demanding higher bonuses amid record profits. The union, now the firm's first majority union, is pushing for 15 percent of operating profit, while shareholders oppose the move. With negotiations stalled, a strike is planned from May, raising concerns over potential disruptions to South Korea's key semiconductor sector. [Read more](#)



10 MOST READ ARTICLES

Fortune in [BTS Stages Massive Comeback Concert at Gwanghwamun Square](#) reports that BTS returned after a four-year hiatus with a free Netflix-exclusive concert in central Seoul on March 21, drawing tens of thousands of fans and launching their new album "ARIRANG."

The Korea Times in [National Assembly Passes \\$350 Billion US Investment Bill with Bipartisan Support](#) reports that lawmakers approved the legislation 226 to 8, establishing the Korea-US Strategic Investment Corp. to manage Seoul's commitment, following Trump's tariff threats.

The Korea Herald in [Special counsel seeks 30-year prison term for Yoon Suk Yeol over drone operations into N. Korea](#) reports that a special counsel team has sought a 30-year prison sentence for former President Yoon Suk Yeol, alleging he ordered drone incursions into Pyongyang in 2024 to provoke North Korea and create a pretext for declaring martial law, charging him with benefiting the enemy and abuse of authority.

The Korea Herald in [Seoul says US security talks should resume swiftly, separate from Coupang probe](#) reports that South Korea has urged the resumption of stalled security negotiations with the United States, emphasizing that the ongoing investigation into Coupang should be treated as a separate legal matter and not linked to broader alliance talks.

The Korea Herald in [Samsung Posts Record 57 Trillion Won Quarterly Profit; Workers Demand Share](#) reports that Samsung's first-quarter operating profit surged eightfold to 57.2 trillion won — the largest quarterly result in Korean corporate history — triggering a union push for a 10% profit-sharing bonus.

Nikkei Asia in [South Korean exports hit all-time high by value on chip front-loading](#) reports that South Korea's exports reached a record high in March 2026, driven by a surge in semiconductor shipments as companies rushed to secure chips amid fears of supply chain disruptions linked to Middle East tensions and a potential helium shortage.

The Chosun Daily in [North Korea Condemns Japan's Yasukuni Offerings as Historical Distortion](#) reports that North Korea, through Rodong Sinmun, criticized Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's offerings to the Yasukuni Shrine, accusing Japan of glorifying war criminals and promoting militarization while distorting its history of aggression.

The Chosun Daily in [North Korea's Exports to China Recover to Pre-Sanction Levels](#) reports that North Korea's exports to China have rebounded to their highest levels since 2017, with first-quarter trade rising 14.3 percent, signaling a recovery in bilateral ties driven by resumed transport links and renewed diplomatic engagement.

The Korea JoongAng Daily in [The conscription age cap may rise to 43. Who is affected, and what can happen to draft dodgers?](#) reports that South Korea is considering raising the maximum conscription age from 38 to 43 to close loopholes that allow draft evasion, with stricter rules and penalties targeting those who avoid military service by staying overseas.

Reuters in [South Korea draws back investors even as Iran war exposes cracks](#) reports that foreign investors are returning to South Korean markets after a sharp March selloff, attracted by AI-driven chip demand and governance reforms, though volatility from the Iran war, a weak won, and energy dependence continue to expose structural vulnerabilities in the economy.



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

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