

South Korea-Japan Relations: Towards a Closer Relationship

JO Yanghyeon

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Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1965, South Korea-Japan relations have experienced many “ups and downs”. They were at their worst in the 2010s when relations plunged into a drawn-out period of antagonism. Indeed, it was the “worst epoch of Korea-Japan relations” in the post-Cold War era. During this period, historical disputes over the emotive issues of Imperial Japanese military comfort women and forced Korean labour became a thorn in the flesh, casting a shadow over various areas including the economy and security.

The Yoon Administration: Towards Better Bilateral Relations

Since the inauguration of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration in May 2022, South Korea-Japan relations have transformed significantly from antagonism to cooperation. Much of the aforementioned historical disputes between South Korea and Japan have been resolved. The two governments have also agreed to cooperate in various fields with visible outcomes. Indeed, South Korea-Japan relations have now been “normalised”, having restored and improved on communication and trust. Japan has lifted export restrictions on South Korea (commonly known as the restoration of the “whitelist” of preferential treatment in trade). The General Security of Military Information Agreement has come back into force. People-to-people

exchanges have increased among politicians, businesspeople, local government officials and tourists. Furthermore, cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo has progressed beyond bilateral communication to discussing comprehensive ROK (Republic of Korea)-US-Japan trilateral collaboration, and regional and global cooperation.

The turning point in the bilateral relations was due to the friendlier and more cooperative attitude towards Japan by the Yoon administration and the warm reciprocity of the Japanese government towards these Korean diplomatic overtures. President Yoon decisively resolved to downplay historical issues, despite facing strong domestic criticism, in order to achieve the strategic goal

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...CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE WERE THE STRATEGIC BACKDROP FOR SEOUL AND TOKYO TO MOVE CLOSER TOGETHER. THESE CHANGES INCLUDE THE COOLING OF SOUTH KOREAN-CHINESE RELATIONS AFTER THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE TERMINAL HIGH ALTITUDE AREA DEFENCE IN 2016, DEEPENING US-CHINA STRATEGIC COMPETITION, THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN INSTABILITY, NORTH KOREA'S RELENTLESS NUCLEARISATION, RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE AND THE US EMPHASIS ON BETTER ROK-US-JAPAN TRILATERAL COOPERATION.

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of maximising national interests. He approached the resolution of historical confrontations from a strategic perspective to enhance the ROK-US alliance, restore ROK-Japan relations and strengthen ROK-US-Japan trilateral cooperation in a mutually reinforcing manner.

Evidently, changes in the international landscape were the strategic backdrop for Seoul and Tokyo to move closer together. These changes include the cooling of South Korean-Chinese relations after the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence in 2016, deepening US-China strategic competition, the COVID-19 global pandemic and global supply chain instability, North Korea's relentless nuclearisation, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the US emphasis on better ROK-US-Japan trilateral cooperation. The convergence of a sense of crisis between Korea and Japan due to the increasing uncertainty of the international landscape is a driving factor for fostering closer South Korea-Japan cooperation.

Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Korea-Japan Cooperation

To establish sustainable Korea-Japan cooperation based on the foundation of trust between the leaders of both nations, it is crucial for the two countries to share a future vision that reflects the evolving international landscape and changes in the dynamics of the South Korea-Japan relationship. In 1998, the Kim Dae-jung and Obuchi administrations forged a "Joint Declaration for a New ROK-Japan Partnership Toward the 21st Century", which presented a vision for a future-oriented Korea-Japan relationship. It is imperative for the two Northeast Asian neighbours to advance and broaden public consensus on the mutual strategic value and importance of South Korea-Japan comprehensive cooperation. The two countries should consider a new and upgraded vision that is aligned with the 60th anniversary of their normalisation of diplomatic relations in 2025.

Should South Korea Acquire Nuclear Weapons?

LAM Peng Er

Head, Korea Centre, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore

Recent public opinion surveys reveal that over 70% of South Koreans are in favour of the Republic of Korea (ROK) acquiring its own nuclear deterrent. This preference is also shared by some prominent Korean politicians and security analysts. The puzzle is why South Koreans are largely keen to acquire nuclear weapons despite the security guarantee resolutely provided by the United States to its Korean ally. After all, the United States has more than 28,000 troops in South Korea to deter a nuclear-armed DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea).

Moreover, the April 2023 Washington Declaration released after the talks between US President Joseph R Biden and ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol unequivocally stated: "The ROK has full confidence in U.S. extended deterrence commitments and recognizes the importance, necessity, and benefit of its enduring reliance on the U.S. nuclear deterrent. ... President Yoon reaffirmed the ROK's longstanding commitment to its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the global nonproliferation regime". The Washington Declaration further reaffirmed that "the United States' commitment to the ROK and the Korean people is enduring and ironclad, and that any nuclear attack by the DPRK against the ROK will be met with swift, overwhelming and decisive response".

There are at least three plausible reasons why many South Koreans wish to acquire nuclear weapons. First, North Korea is relentlessly boosting its nuclear arsenal despite South Korea's past attempts at both diplomatic engagement and military deterrence. Second, North Korea and Russia have forged a tighter security partnership especially after the latter's invasion of Ukraine. The alleged despatch of North Korean troops to assist Russia against Ukraine is alarming to South Korea indeed. The South Koreans are concerned that a transactional relationship is consolidating between Moscow and Pyongyang. In exchange for North Korean ammunition, missiles and troops, Russia will provide diplomatic support to the DPRK at the United Nations Security Council, energy (oil and gas), food, and technical assistance in satellites, submarines and nuclear weapons. South Korea fears that the DPRK's alliance with Russia will embolden and strengthen North Korea, boosting its nuclear capabilities.

The third reason is the nagging suspicion among some South Korean political and security elites and members of the public is that when push comes to shove, the United States would hesitate to sacrifice Seattle for Seoul in a nuclear showdown with North Korea. It is also conceivable that a future US president prioritising America First may provide a less than ironclad security guarantee to its South Korean ally compared to the Biden administration.

Despite South Korean sentiments favouring the acquisition of nuclear weapons, there are at least four compelling reasons why ROK should *not* build a nuclear arsenal and engage in a nuclear arms race with the DPRK.

First, a decision by Seoul to acquire its own nuclear *force de frappe* would undermine its alliance with the United States. Such a policy is tantamount to signalling to the United States that South Korea has no faith in the extended deterrence of the United States and their alliance despite the commitment of more than 28,000 American troops in the ROK. If Seoul insists on going its own way in acquiring its own nuclear deterrent, its alliance with the United States in all likelihood will be jeopardised.

Second, the DPRK is likely to boost its nuclear deterrent in response to ROK going nuclear and this will lead to a vicious cycle of more nuclear warheads, threats and blusters. A security dilemma and greater insecurity for all in the Korean peninsula will ensue.

Third, Japan may seriously consider the nuclear option if South Korea is adamant about acquiring nuclear weapons. Should both South Korea and Japan become nuclear weapon states, it could drive China to significantly increase its nuclear arsenal as a countermeasure. In this worrisome scenario, all four Northeast Asian countries (China, Japan, ROK and DPRK) will acquire considerable nuclear warheads and delivery systems. In theory, MAD (mutual assured destruction) and a second-strike capability may prevail leading to an absence of war in Northeast Asia because the cost of war and widescale annihilation is too high. However, it is not unimaginable that fear, human folly, miscalculations, accidental conflicts and the ladder of escalation could lead to preemptive nuclear strikes and counter strikes, potentially dooming these countries if they were to become nuclear-armed states.

Fourth, it is conceivable that if all Northeast Asian countries were to become nuclear weapon states, an ASEAN state may decide to do likewise for security and status. To be sure, in December 1995, ASEAN member states signed the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Treaty). Through this treaty, ASEAN member states reaffirm the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) towards global peace and security. If an ASEAN state were to break ranks to acquire nuclear weapons, other ASEAN states may follow for the sake of deterrence. In this bleak scenario, the ROK's acquisition of nuclear weapons may unwittingly trigger a domino effect first in Northeast Asia and then in Southeast Asia, ultimately leading to the collapse of the NPT regime in both sub-regions of East Asia in the long run.

In conclusion, while the temptation for South Korea to flirt with the nuclear weapon option is indeed great, its alliance with the United States is time-tested and South Korea should not undermine it by becoming a nuclear state. Simply put, South Korea should work out a security division of labour with the United States instead of becoming a nuclear power. If South Korea's move comes to fruition, it could backfire, potentially leading to the collapse of the NPT regime and increasing insecurity for all in East Asia.

Highlights at the Korea Centre



Discussions with delegation from the Korea Foundation.



With Dr Satu Limaye, vice president of the East-West Centre (second from left)



In a meeting with Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University led by Weatherhead Director Professor Lien-Hang T Nguyen (third from right)



With His Excellency Republic of Korea Ambassador to Singapore Hong Jin-wook (second from left)

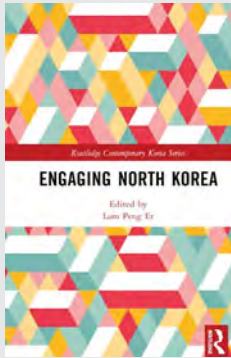


Professor Vitaly Kozyrev, distinguished professor of political science and international relations, Endicott College, Beverly, MA



In a discussion with a director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea (second from right)

Forthcoming Publication



Engaging North Korea

Editor: *Lam Peng Er*

Publisher: *Routledge of London and New York*

Year of Publication: 2025

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This book presents a comprehensive overview of international attempts to engage North Korea diplomatically with the aim of avoiding a nuclear war.

It highlights the difficulty of this task, concluding that the containment of North Korea currently depends more on military deterrence than on diplomatic restraint. It considers the various multilateral attempts at diplomatic engagement over recent decades and explores the different approaches of different countries, examining the domestic factors and the strategic interests which drive different countries' different approaches. It includes an account of China's growing estrangement, Russia's increasing closeness and the surprising relationship between North Korea and Sweden which has been effective in providing the North Korean people with humanitarian aid.

Revealing the story of diplomatic frustrations and failures when engaging North Korea this book will appeal to students and scholars of Korean studies, Asian politics and international relations.

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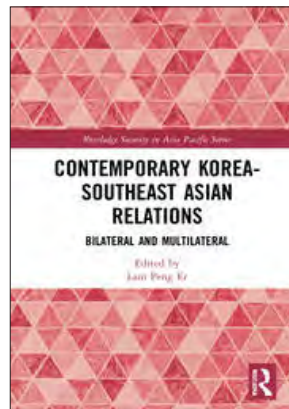
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11. The European Union's Humanitarian Assistance Program in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by *Saroj DASH*

Recent Publications

Contemporary Korea-Southeast Asian Relations: Bilateral and Multilateral



Editor: Lam Peng Er

Publisher: Routledge

Year of Publication: 2022

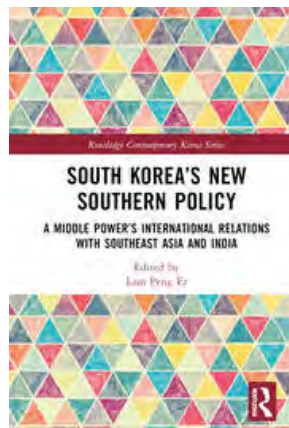
Description:

This book presents a comprehensive overview of the relations between the two Koreas and the different ASEAN states, including their relations with ASEAN as an organisation. It outlines a complex picture with both bilateral and multilateral relations in play at the same time. It charts how the present situation has arisen for each relationship, discusses current difficulties and strains, and assesses how the relationship may develop in future.

For more details, visit:

https://www.routledge.com/Contemporary-Korea-Southeast-Asian-Relations-Bilateral-and-Multilateral/Peng-Er/p/book/9781032111797?gclid=EAlaIqobChMI-duGysbL_gIVxYBLBR019w6SEAAYASAAEgIMS_D_BwE

South Korea's New Southern Policy: A Middle Power's International Relations with Southeast Asia and India



Editor: Lam Peng Er

Publisher: Routledge

Year of Publication: 2023

Description:

This book examines the first regional strategy of South Korea towards Southeast Asia and India. At issue is how a middle power (a G20 country with the tenth largest economy in the world) seeks to play a larger and more comprehensive role in regions beyond the Korean peninsula. Hitherto, South Korean foreign policy has focused on nuclearizing North Korea, alliance maintenance with the United States, tricky relations with its most important economic partner China, and difficult ties with Japan marred by historical and territorial disputes. The Moon Administration has sought to diversify South Korean foreign policy by elevating ASEAN and India to the same strategic level as the United States, China, Russia and Japan. To be sure, the latter countries continue to be most significant to the Korean peninsula. However, this book offers different country and regional perspectives on Seoul's first regional grand strategy to play a role commensurate with its status as a middle power.

For more details, visit:

<https://www.routledge.com/South-Koreas-New-Southern-Policy-A-Middle-Powers-International-Relations/Er/p/book/9781032404479>

CHRONOLOGY

ASEAN - Korea Relations

A Chronology of Key Events:

July 2024 to September 2024

Gordon Kang

S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University

THE Korea Centre at the East Asian Institute closely monitors Southeast Asian regional developments vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula. This chronology considers key bilateral and multilateral interstate interactions between both Koreas and individual ASEAN countries, as well as with ASEAN as a regional institution.

July 2024

1st	Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the Economic Community Satvinder Singh and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Ambassador to ASEAN Lee Jang-Keun launched the ASEAN-ROK Project on Critical Minerals Management and Strategy for a Sustainable Environment in Jakarta. The project will focus on capacity building for ASEAN officials in critical minerals exploration, incorporating smart technologies and real-time data platforms. It also aims to update ASEAN member states' geological and mineral maps to attract investment and support mineral development. Singh expressed gratitude to the ROK, emphasising the project's role in advancing digital transformation in ASEAN's mineral sector, improving sustainability, efficiency and safety. He also acknowledged the contributions of CCOP, Indonesia's Geological Agency, and KIGAM, the project's co-proponents.
1st - 3rd	ROK Director-General for Korean Peninsula Policy Lee Junil hosted roundtable discussions for members of the Peace Club and Peninsula Club on 1 and 3 July respectively to discuss recent developments regarding North Korea. The Peace Club is a consultative body that facilitates dialogue between South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and diplomatic missions in Seoul with countries that have established embassies or development offices in North Korea. The Peninsula Club is a similar body to the Peace Club, consisting of diplomatic missions in Seoul that handle relations with both South and North Korea. Together, the clubs have a membership of 20 countries. Approximately 30 diplomats, including ambassadors from Laos, attended the event. Lee emphasised the growing military and economic ties between Russia and North Korea, highlighting the interconnectedness of security in Asia and Europe. He stressed the need for a firm international response and outlined North Korea's ongoing provocations, including satellite and missile launches, GPS disruptions and the release of trash balloons. Participants expressed concern over the Russia-North Korea partnership and the potential harm caused by North Korea's actions, urging for strong messages on multilateral platforms. They also acknowledged the value of the roundtable in deepening their understanding of the ROK government's stance.
2nd	Cambodia and the ROK discussed enhancing cooperation to promote digital education in Cambodia during a meeting between Kim Sethany, secretary of state at Cambodia's Ministry of Education, and Jung Dae-Ho, director general of the Education Department of Busan city. The two sides praised nearly 20 years of successful collaboration in education and committed to renewing their partnership in 2025. The renewed cooperation will focus on networking between schools in Busan and Cambodia, sharing educational technology experiences and capacity building, particularly for Cambodian teachers. Kim highlighted South Korea's leadership in integrating technology into education and expressed that the partnership will significantly advance Cambodia's educational system.

2nd - 3rd	The ASEAN-Korea Centre, led by Secretary General Kim Jae-shin, hosted a seminar on ASEAN-Korea sustainable waste management in Vientiane, Lao PDR as part of the 'Investment and Market Research Mission 2024'. The event brought together officials and business representatives from South Korea and five Mekong countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) to discuss waste management trends, government policies and technological innovations. The programme included a seminar on sustainable waste management in the Mekong region, followed by site visits to the Integrated Resources Recovery Centre and Mekong River Commission Headquarters. Participants also learned about the waste management challenges in Vientiane during a visit to the Vientiane City Office for Management and Service.
3rd	South Korea's Hyundai Motor Group and LG Energy Solution launched Indonesia's first electric vehicle (EV) battery cell production plant with an annual capacity of 10 Gigawatt hours. Announced in 2021, the companies invested \$1.1 billion in the West Java plant, which can produce enough battery cells to power over 150,000 EVs per year. The Indonesian government revealed that Hyundai and LG have committed to investing up to \$9.8 billion in the country to develop an EV supply chain, leveraging Indonesia's abundant critical minerals like nickel and copper.
3rd	The ROK MOFA hosted the fifth ROK-Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Partnership Seminar in Seoul. IORA, which promotes economic and social cooperation among Indian Ocean coastal countries, welcomed South Korea as a Dialogue Partner in 2018. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are member countries of IORA. The ROK-IORA Partnership Seminar, a track 1.5 platform for policy and academic exchange, was proposed by South Korea during the 2019 IORA Council of Ministers Meeting. This year's seminar, themed "Harnessing Sustainable Ocean Resources through Ocean Research", featured participation from IORA Secretary General Salman Al Farisi, government officials, researchers and ocean experts who discussed cooperation on marine resource development and shared maritime research from their respective countries.
4-5th	The 2024 ASEAN-ROK Financial Cooperation Forum was held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Economic Community Satvinder Singh delivered congratulatory remarks, emphasising ASEAN's efforts in promoting sustainable finance. He also welcomed the strengthening of cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK in their shared goal of achieving net zero emissions.
5th	The Embassy of the ROK in Dili, Timor Leste, officially handed over electronic equipment to Timor-Leste's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation during a ceremony held in the Salão Nobre (Great Hall) of the ministry. Shin Man-Taek, the Korean ambassador, and Marcos da Costa, director-general of Bilateral Affairs for Asia and Oceania, attended the event. The donation included 170 desktop computers, 60 laptops, 60 printers and 12 projectors. Marcos da Costa expressed gratitude on behalf of the ministry and acknowledged the generosity and support of the ROK government. He noted that the equipment would enhance access to information and improve the ministry's operations, representing not just technological advancement, but a strong commitment to continued progress and innovation.
9th	Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang welcomed South Korean companies to invest in affordable housing projects for low-income earners during a reception in Hanoi. Quang met a delegation of Korean businesses, led by Jung Won-ju, chairman of Daewoo E&C Group and the Korea Housing Builders' Association. Quang highlighted the growing Vietnam-ROK relationship and praised the success of Korean-invested projects, particularly in green and modern urban development, expressing optimism about future collaborations between Korean and Vietnamese companies. Jung thanked the Vietnamese government for supporting the Starlake urban area project, which is attracting secondary investment from major Korean and international players. He also sought further assistance for a new urban development project in Thai Binh province and shared that the ROK Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport would be visiting Vietnam soon to promote housing cooperation. He added that more Korean companies are expected to explore investment opportunities in the country.
9-11th	South Korea and Thailand held their first discussions on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to establish a free trade deal by late 2025. The negotiations were hosted by Thailand's Department of Trade Negotiations (DTN), led by Chotima Iemsawadikul. The South Korean delegation was headed by Roh Keon-ki, deputy minister for trade negotiations from South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy. Officials from various Thai ministries also participated. Thirteen joint sub-committees will focus on different aspects of the free trade agreement, such as trade of goods, customs and trade facilitation. Since the EPA negotiations were announced in March, both sides have completed preliminary tasks, including drafting an accord and consulting relevant ministries. This first round of talks aimed to establish positions by sector to expedite the negotiation process.

14th	Deputy Secretary-General of the ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh participated in the 40th SEOM-ROK Consultation in Vientiane. The meeting focused on the implementation and potential upgrade of the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Area and reviewed the status of economic cooperation between ASEAN and South Korea.
14th	The People's Committee of Ha Nam province, Vietnam signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Korea Overseas Infrastructure and Urban Development Corporation (KIND) to establish a strategic cooperation framework for smart urban area and high-tech zone projects in the province. Under the agreement, local units will provide necessary support, conduct surveys and hold regular meetings to assess project progress. KIND will mobilise financial and technical resources, offer progress updates and help attract South Korean investors. KIND President Lee Kang Hoon highlighted the corporation's experience in urban infrastructure, while Ha Nam's Chairman Truong Quoc Huy stressed the province's focus on attracting investment for smart urban and high-tech development. Huy urged KIND to collaborate closely with local departments to ensure effective implementation of the projects.
15th	Vietnamese Minister of Home Affairs Pham Thi Thanh Tra and South Korea's Minister of the Interior and Safety Lee Sang-min agreed to strengthen cooperation in public administration during a meeting in Seoul. They plan to hold a seminar on government innovation by year's end, with South Korea sharing information to support Vietnam's administrative reforms. The two countries have actively shared insights on public sector reform and civil service training, with South Korea hosting Vietnamese delegations for short-term training to aid Vietnam's digital transformation and e-government efforts. Lee emphasised South Korea's focus on public administration reform through digital transformation and enhancing civil servant capacities.
16th	The Vietnam-Korea Plus Partnership Week 2024 convened in Ho Chi Minh City, organised by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency under South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy in collaboration with other organisations. The weeklong event aims to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation and continue fostering trade and industrial partnerships between Vietnam and South Korea. Focusing on smart and environmentally friendly industries, the event highlights key sectors such as energy, environment, healthcare, and smart agriculture, creating a foundation for future economic collaboration between the two nations.
16th	Vietnam's Construction Minister Nguyen Thanh Nghi and South Korea's Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Park Sanwoo signed an MOU in Hanoi to boost collaboration in urban and social housing development. This agreement aims to deepen ties within the comprehensive strategic partnership between Vietnam and the ROK. The talks allowed the two ministries to review cooperative achievements since their 2018 MOU, including projects such as the Vietnam-Korea Cooperation Centre for Smart City and Construction Technology and the Urban Planning Information System. Nghi proposed more delegation exchanges to share expertise in social housing development and requested expedited progress on Korean Official Development Assistance-funded projects. Both sides agreed to facilitate Korean firm participation in the Urban Growth Partnership Programme and Vietnam's goal to build 1 million affordable apartments by 2030.
17th	Vietnam's Minister of Home Affairs Pham Thi Thanh Tra led a delegation to South Korea in a meeting with the National Human Resources Development Institute (NHI) and Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) to discuss public sector training and smart city management. Tra highlighted strong Vietnam-South Korea ties and sought continued collaboration in leadership and public-private partnerships. NHI President Kim Chae-Hwan expressed hopes for ongoing cooperation, particularly in public official training. The delegation also explored KAIST's training model and met the Korean Ministry of Personnel Management and Seoul officials to discuss future smart city initiatives.
19th	The Cambodian Ministry of Justice signed a Draft Treaty on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons with counterparts from the ROK MOFA and Ministry of Justice. Representatives from various Cambodian ministries, including the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and officials from the Central Authority of Cambodia, participated. The signing signifies the commitment of both countries to facilitate the transfer of prisoners, allowing them to serve their sentences in their home countries. This development is expected to improve the welfare of prisoners and streamline judicial processes in Cambodia and South Korea.
19th	Vice-Prime Minister Mariano Assanami Sabino, coordinating minister for Social Affairs and minister for Rural Development and Community Housing of Timor-Leste signed an MOU with South Korea's minister of Interior and Security to collaborate on the Saemaul Undong initiative. The endorsement took place during Sabino's official visit to South Korea. During the visit, the delegation visited several institutions and companies, including Haechun Co. Ltd, which expressed interest in investing in renewable energy in East Timor. The delegation also toured the Busan Agricultural Technology Training Centre, Eco Delta Smart City, Eco Delta Smart Village, SK Forest and the Saemaul Undong Museum. Accompanying Sabino were other key officials, including Vice-Minister of State Administration Jacinto Rigoberto, Secretary of State for Forestry Fernandinho Vieira and municipal authorities and directors from Dili and Ataúro.

24th	South Korean Minister of Justice Park Sung Jae and Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam signed the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters in Singapore. The Treaty establishes a framework for legal assistance in criminal matters between the two nations, outlining specific procedures and scope. It is expected to improve the efficiency of criminal proceedings and safeguard the rights of the two countries' nationals. The Treaty will come into effect once the two countries complete their domestic ratification processes. Prior to the signing, Park and Shanmugam held a bilateral meeting to discuss further judicial cooperation and strengthen mutual efforts in promoting criminal justice and the rule of law.
25th	Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh hosted a reception for his Korean counterpart, Han Duck Soo, who led a delegation to Vietnam for the state funeral of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong. Chinh expressed deep gratitude to President Yoon Suk-yeol and the South Korean government for their condolences and for sending Han as the president's special envoy, underscoring the gesture as a significant mark of respect for Vietnam and its comprehensive strategic partnership with South Korea. Han conveyed heartfelt condolences to the Vietnamese government, people and the late leader's family, honouring the contributions of General Secretary Trong to Vietnam and the lasting friendship between the two nations.
25th	Officials from the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Cabinet and DPRK armed forces visited the Vietnamese embassy in Pyongyang to mourn the passing of Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Among the attendees were Kang Yun Sok, Jong Myong Su and Pak Sang Gil. Along with tributes from various ministries and committees was a joint wreath from the WPK, Supreme People's Assembly and the DPRK Cabinet. Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the WPK and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, sent a wreath to the embassy in Pyongyang and to the state funeral in Hanoi. Ri Ho Jun, charge d'affaires ad interim of the DPRK embassy in Hanoi, laid the wreath on his behalf. On 19 July, Kim Jong Un also conveyed condolences to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, praising Nguyen Phu Trong for his contributions to Vietnam's development and DPRK-Vietnam relations, particularly following the 2019 Hanoi summit.
25th	Ministers from ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea attended the 25th ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Vientiane as part of the 57th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting and Related Meetings from 23 to 27 July. The meeting reviewed the progress of the APT Cooperation Work Plan (2023-2027) and discussed the future direction of collaboration. APT countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the APT framework to enhance regional cooperation and address emerging challenges.
25th - 26th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre, under Secretary General Kim Jae-shin, organised the 'Harnessing Local Potential: Best Practices in Community-based Tourism Development' Workshop in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia. The three-day workshop focused on digital promotion and branding for local and community-based tourism enterprises. It featured presentations from experts from both Korea and Malaysia, including academic and industry professionals, along with case studies, discussions on ASEAN and international tourism trends, and insights on leveraging digital tools for sustainable tourism. Participants also took part in technical visits to community-based tourism sites in Terengganu.
26th	The ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference with the ROK was held in Vientiane, attended by ASEAN foreign ministers, ROK's Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul and ASEAN Secretary-General Dr Kao Kim Hourn, with Timor-Leste as an observer. The meeting reviewed the progress of ASEAN-ROK cooperation and discussed plans for establishing the ASEAN-ROK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership later in the year, to coincide with the 35th anniversary of their dialogue relations. The ministers also exchanged views on regional and international issues of shared concern. Further, on the sidelines of the meetings, Cho held bilateral discussions with the foreign ministers of Malaysia, Laos, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore. They discussed bilateral relations, regional issues, Korea-ASEAN cooperation and international collaboration. With Malaysia, Cho agreed to enhance cooperation with both countries as chairs of APEC and ASEAN next year, and to strengthen ties in defence, education and high-level exchanges. In talks with Laos, Cho pledged support for its ASEAN chairmanship and the two ministers agreed to mark the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations next year with the deepening of ties. With Indonesia, the two ministers focused on advancing the "Special Strategic Partnership", particularly in electric vehicles and fighter jet development. Discussions with Brunei centred on strengthening cooperation in ICT, climate response and defence. With Singapore, discussions focused on enhancing economic ties through Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) ahead of their 50th diplomatic anniversary in 2025. Cho raised concerns about North Korea's provocations and illegal cooperation with Russia, urging ASEAN's strong stance on the issue.

26th	South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul and Lao Deputy Prime Minister Saleumxay Kommasith co-chaired the 12th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Vientiane, marking the first in-person meeting in three years. The meeting reviewed ongoing Mekong-ROK cooperation, such as through Cooperation Fund projects and Mekong-ROK Business Forum. Cho reaffirmed South Korea's commitment to the Mekong region via the Indo-Pacific Strategy and Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative, pledging to double the Fund by 2027. He highlighted South Korea's new partnership with the Mekong River Commission and its \$23 million humanitarian aid for Myanmar. The two sides agreed to create a new action plan for post-2025 cooperation as the current Mekong-ROK Plan of Action 2021-2025 draws to a conclusion.
27th	With the theme of "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience", the 31st ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Meeting took place in Vientiane, chaired by Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith. The meeting expressed deep concern over rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula, particularly the DPRK's ballistic missile tests. The ministers called for peaceful dialogue and urged the DPRK to fully comply with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, advocating for the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. The forum highlighted the need for diplomatic efforts to create a conducive environment for dialogue and reiterated ASEAN's readiness to play a constructive role, utilising platforms like the ARF. Some Ministers also emphasised addressing humanitarian concerns, including resolving abduction and detainee issues.
29th	Samdech Moha Rathsapheathika Thipadei Khuon Sudary, president of the National Assembly of Cambodia, welcomed Lee Cheol-woo, governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do province, South Korea at the National Assembly Palace in Phnom Penh. Lee congratulated Samdech Rathsaphea Thipadei on her appointment as NA president and praised the strong Cambodia-South Korea partnership. Samdech Rathsaphea Thipadei expressed her gratitude for South Korea's support, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when Korean flights remained operational and volunteer doctors were deployed to Cambodia. In recognition of Lee's contributions to enhancing bilateral relations and cultural ties, King Norodom Sihamoni awarded him the Royal Order of Sahametrei Grand Cross.
30th	The Seventh Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) was held. Members shared experiences on implementing smart city projects and discussed expanding financing options, strengthening technical support, capacity building and implementing post-2025 efforts for smart and sustainable cities. The meeting, hosted by Lao PDR's Ministry of Public Works and Transport, featured opening remarks from its minister Ngampasong Muongmany, who highlighted the need for investment, data governance and public acceptance of smart technologies. Dr Viengnam Douangphachanh, chair of the meeting, emphasised the growing demand for sustainable urban solutions. Representatives from Japan, South Korea and the United States explored cooperation in advancing smart urban development. The meeting was followed by the ASCN Conference on Smart Solutions for Solving Urban Issues on 31 July 2024.
30th	Ri Kil Song was appointed as the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the DPRK to the Republic of Singapore, and Ri Sung Guk was appointed as the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the DPRK to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
30th	A Singaporean woman, Koh Poh Choo, was fined \$3,500 for aiding the shipment of more than \$600,000 worth of alcohol and drinks, including Pokka and Nescafe, to North Korea. Koh, a shipping manager at Skyline Shipping, pleaded guilty to one charge of assisting another company, Eluva International, in delivering luxury items to a North Korean individual, with five additional charges considered during sentencing. Singapore's trade sanctions against North Korea prohibit the supply or transfer of designated export items to the country. In 2017 and 2018, Koh helped Eluva arrange freight forwarding services to ship goods, including alcoholic beverages such as Johnnie Walker, Hennessy and Chivas, to North Korea. Eluva, working on behalf of a North Korean customer, sourced goods from Singapore and used Skyline Shipping as one of the freight forwarders to facilitate the deliveries.
31st	NK News reported that Singapore-based nonprofit Choson Exchange plans to resume in-person training for North Korean entrepreneurs this autumn, marking its first face-to-face workshop since 2019. Following four years of remote programmes due to North Korea's COVID-19 border closures, the organisation announced on social media that it recently returned to the DPRK. Ian Bennett, associate head of programmes, confirmed that the nonprofit organisation aims to hold its first offline workshop since 2019 around October or November, following a May visit to assess local needs. Since 2007, Choson Exchange has conducted business training for aspiring DPRK entrepreneurs, which transitioned online in 2021 due to pandemic restrictions.

31st July - 7th Aug	The ASEAN-Korea Centre, led by Secretary General Kim Jae-shin, organised the 2024 ASEAN-Korea Youth Network Workshop in Seoul and Vientiane. Under the theme of "Building an Inclusive and Resilient ASEAN-Korea Partnership: Listening to Youth Leadership on Digitalisation and Climate Change Cooperation", the event aimed to promote discussions and solutions among youth leaders from ASEAN and Korea. The Workshop involved 50 students selected by ASEAN Embassies and open applications, with sessions held in partnership with Seoul National University Asia Centre and the Lao Youth Union. Participants attended lectures on climate change and digitalisation, conducted fieldwork and engaged in team-building and cultural exchanges. High-ranking officials from Korea and Lao PDR were in attendance, with Secretary General Kim highlighting the importance of empowering youth to address regional and global challenges, particularly in digitalisation and climate change.
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August 2024

1st	The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the DPRK to Thailand Kim Je Bong paid a farewell call on King Maha Vajiralongkorn of Thailand. Kim conveyed greetings from Kim Jong Un, president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, to the King. In response, King Vajiralongkorn expressed his gratitude and asked the Ambassador to pass along his sincere greetings to President Kim Jong Un. The King fondly recalled his meetings with Kim Il Sung during his visits to the DPRK and expressed hope that the friendly relations between the two nations would continue to flourish.
1st - 2nd	Maris Sangiampongsa, minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, made an official visit to South Korea at the invitation of ROK Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul. This was Maris' first visit to the ROK as foreign minister. During his visit, Maris met ROK Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, reflecting on the strong Thailand-ROK ties, rooted in their shared legacy from the Korean War. They discussed ways to enhance their partnership, particularly in trade, investment, clean and nuclear energy, and tourism. On 2 August, Maris held a bilateral meeting with Cho, focusing on future cooperation in high-tech industries, including clean energy, digital technology and content industries. They welcomed the first round of negotiations on the Thailand-ROK Economic Partnership Agreement, which aims to boost trade and attract ROK companies to Thailand. The two ministers also announced the establishment of the Thailand-ROK Joint Cultural Committee (JCC), to foster cooperation in soft power, youth exchange and content industries. Thailand will host the first JCC meeting in the later part of 2024. Additionally, they agreed to set up a 2+2 Dialogue between their defence and foreign ministries to enhance security cooperation, and discussed improving tourism exchanges, easing travel systems and supporting employment programmes for Thai workers in the ROK. They also agreed to promote collaboration under ASEAN and Mekong-ROK frameworks, with Thailand as the ASEAN-ROK coordinator for 2024-2027. Maris also hosted a working lunch with leading Korean companies, highlighting Thailand's strategic location as a regional trade and investment hub.
2nd	President To Lam met ROK Ambassador Choi Young-sam in Hanoi, Vietnam highlighting the strong Vietnam-ROK relationship, which has recently been elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership. He emphasised the importance of maintaining high-level exchanges, enhancing defence-security cooperation and hitting the \$100 billion trade target and further to \$150 billion by 2030. To Lam also encouraged increased Korean investments in high-tech sectors like semiconductors, digital transformation and renewable energy. Choi committed to strengthening bilateral ties, focusing on economic, trade and investment cooperation, including LNG and nuclear power projects. He also advocated for expanded defence industry collaboration and citizen protection efforts.
2nd	ROK Deputy Minister for International Affairs Choi Ji-young and Singapore's Deputy Minister of Finance Kevin Shum convened the ninth Korea-Singapore High-Level Policy Dialogue on the Economy in Singapore, the first annual meeting after a decade-long gap. The dialogue, which serves as a platform for enhancing economic and financial cooperation, included discussions on global economic trends, ASEAN+3 regional financial cooperation and climate crisis response. Key topics included measures to strengthen the ASEAN+3 financial safety net, particularly through the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation, and enhancing the role of the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO). Both sides also shared strategies for addressing the climate crisis and advancing sustainable finance. The meeting reinforced the Korea-Singapore partnership, with plans for continued dialogue; the next session has been scheduled in Korea in 2025. Additionally, Choi visited Singaporean financial institutions to review Korea's foreign exchange market reforms and discussed future cooperation with AMRO's Director Li Kouqing on advancing regional financial collaboration.

5th	Vietnam National Assembly Chairman Tran Thanh Man welcomed ROK Ambassador Choi Young-sam as he begins his Ambassadorial term in Vietnam, expressing gratitude for ROK Prime Minister Han Duck Soo's recent visit, which underscored Korea's strong relations with Vietnam. Man highlighted the Vietnam-ROK comprehensive strategic partnership and the goal of reaching \$100 billion in trade by 2025 and \$150 billion by 2030, with a focus on high-tech, semiconductors, education and health care. Ambassador Choi agreed that ROK will continue to strengthen ties, boost cooperation in high-tech sectors and encourage Korean investment, while seeking supportive policies for Korean businesses and communities in Vietnam.
6th	The Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency in Hanoi, part of the Embassy of the ROK in Vietnam, organised a conference focused on Vietnam-ROK cooperation in the semiconductor industry. Vo Xuan Hoai, deputy director of the National Innovation Centre under Vietnam's Ministry of Planning and Investment, highlighted that Vietnam is home to over 40 chip design companies and nearly 15 others involved in packaging, testing and manufacturing semiconductor-related equipment, with many companies hailing from South Korea, including Samsung, Hana Micron and Amkor Technology. Hoai also emphasised the Vietnamese government's strong political commitment to advancing the semiconductor sector, considering it a key area for socio-economic development. He highlighted that relevant resolutions from the Party, National Assembly and government have prioritised the industry, with a National Committee, chaired by the prime minister, having been established to oversee its growth and development.
6-9th	Philippines Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique A Manalo conducted an official visit to the ROK from 6 to 9 August 2024. On 7 August, Manalo met Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul and paid a courtesy call to ROK Prime Minister Han Duck-soo. In these meetings, Manalo highlighted the progress in strengthening cooperation between the Philippines and South Korea, which celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations in March 2024. A key focus was on expediting plans for the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership to guide future relations. They also exchanged views on North Korea's provocations, expressing gratitude for the Philippines' firm stance and urging continued cooperation in delivering a strong international message to North Korea. The discussions also covered other areas of bilateral relations, regional issues such as the South China Sea and Myanmar, and multilateral cooperation. Manalo also delivered remarks at Seoul National University, engaged with local media, met the Filipino community and visited the Joint Security Area at the Demilitarized Zone.
7th	The Indonesian government is partnering with South Korea to construct an underwater toll road for Nusantara, the country's new capital. The project, estimated to cost around US\$690 million (Rp 11 trillion), will be Indonesia's first immersed tunnel. Wida Nurfaida, an infrastructure director at the Public Works and Housing Ministry, shared this update during the Indonesia-Korea Technical Exchange Seminar and Business Networking 2024.
7th	South Korean automaker Hyundai Motor Company plans to invest US\$28 million in a facility to assemble EVs and batteries in Thailand, according to Thailand's Board of Investment. This new factory, located southeast of Bangkok, is expected to begin production in 2026. Chinese companies like BYD and Great Wall Motors invested in Thailand to serve as its manufacturing base for Southeast Asia. BOI Secretary General Narit Therdsteerasukdi highlighted that Thailand's strong supply chain would enable Hyundai to source at least a third of the raw materials and parts from within the country, further supporting the local industry.
9th	The 16th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting and Related Meetings was held from 5 to 9 August 2024 in Vientiane. The second ASEAN-ROK Health Ministers Meeting was held on 9 August 2024. The meeting acknowledged ROK's contributions through projects like the 'UHC International Training Course' and the 'ASEAN-Adaptive Financial Risk Management System', which strengthened health systems for sustainable universal health coverage in the region. Further appreciation was expressed for ROK's support in enhancing health system resilience and regional health security through initiatives such as the 'ASEAN e-Government Cloud System for Infectious Disease Response' and 'Infectious Disease Response Capacity Building'. The meeting emphasised the importance of continued ASEAN-ROK cooperation, including through the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund and Official Development Assistance, to improve health outcomes. The 10th ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting also took place on the same day. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to deepening cooperation on areas identified at the 13th ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development. They agreed to maximise the ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three mechanisms to address health emergencies and strengthen health systems, particularly in the context of future pandemics. Key initiatives discussed included the ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network, ASEAN+3 Universal Health Coverage Network, ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre Network, ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre and ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases.

8-11th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre, led by Secretary General Kim Jae-shin, held the 'ASEAN Trade Fair 2024' at The Platz, COEX Convention and Exhibition Centre. Since its launch in 2009, the Trade Fair has become a key event for showcasing food and beverage products from the 10 ASEAN member states and facilitating business connections with Korean buyers. This year's event featured three zones: the F&B Booth Exhibition, B2B Business Meeting and ASEAN Pop-up Store, where 44 ASEAN companies displayed a variety of products such as sauces, chocolates and coffees. The Trade Fair coincided with ASEAN Day on 8 August, featuring promotional activities like quizzes and raffles to engage the public and promote ASEAN.
12th	DPRK Ambassador Ri Sung Guk presented his credentials to To Lam, president of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, who also serves as the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Ri conveyed warm greetings from Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK. To Lam expressed his gratitude and asked Ri to convey his heartfelt greetings to Kim Jong Un, thanking him for his congratulatory remarks on his election as president and general secretary. He affirmed Vietnam's support for the DPRK's efforts towards independence, prosperity, peace and development, expressing confidence in the DPRK's ability to overcome challenges and achieve success in building their country and improving living standards. To Lam noted the deepening of friendly and cooperative relations between Vietnam and the DPRK, established by President Ho Chi Minh and President Kim Il Sung, and further strengthened by Kim Jong Un's visit to Vietnam. He expressed optimism for the continued growth of bilateral relations between the two nations.
13th	In his meeting with Prime Minister Hun Manet, South Korean Ambassador to Cambodia Park Jung-Wook commended Cambodia for its efforts to improve the investment climate, hence increasing Korean investor interest. He acknowledged that various incentives and coordination mechanisms have bolstered investor confidence. Park reiterated his commitment to promoting Cambodia-South Korea relations, which were elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2024. Key areas of cooperation discussed included trade, investment, defence, security, tourism, people-to-people exchanges and vocational training. Hun praised ROK's efforts to further expand the relationship, noting growing interest from Korean investors following his recent official visit to Seoul.
14th	ROK Ambassador to Cambodia Park Jung-Wook met Chea Serey, governor of the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC), where they discussed strengthening investment relations. Park praised NBC's achievements, particularly in the adoption of digital payment systems using Quick-Response (QR) codes and was supportive of more Korean investments in Cambodia's banking sector. He called for support from related ministries, especially in banking, finance and cybersecurity. Serey expressed gratitude for South Korea's technical assistance and collaboration on monetary policy, noting cooperation with the Korea Deposit Insurance Corporation on deposit protection and banking solutions. The two parties agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefit of citizens.
15th	The third DGICM + 3 Consultation took place in Nha Trang, Vietnam co-chaired by Major General Pham Dang Khoa of Vietnam's Immigration Department and Shimizu Hiroki from Japan's Immigration Services Agency. Attended by heads of Immigration and Consular Affairs from ASEAN member states, China, Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN Secretariat, with Timor-Leste as an observer, the meeting explored potential collaboration in immigration, consular affairs and border management. ASEAN expressed gratitude to the Plus Three countries for their ongoing support in enhancing the region's immigration and consular capacities.
16th	The ROK Consulate General in Da Nang, Vietnam, hosted a conference to explore prospects for ICT investment cooperation between Vietnam and South Korea. The event featured municipal leaders, businesses, IT experts and students from universities in Vietnam's central region. The focus was on sharing insights into South Korea's semiconductor industry, which has drawn interest from Vietnam, and explored ICT cooperation prospects. Consul General Kang Boosung expressed hope that more Korean ICT enterprises will invest in Vietnam's central region, creating career opportunities for Vietnamese students and further strengthening the bilateral partnership in the ICT sector.
16th	South Korea's defence authorities approved a reduction to 600 billion won (US\$440 million) from the originally agreed 1.6 trillion won in Indonesia's financial contribution to the joint KF-21 fighter jet development project. The decision comes amid concerns over Indonesia's commitment to the project, following repeated payment delays. Under the initial 2015 agreement, Indonesia was to cover about 20% of the 8.1 trillion-won project in exchange for technology transfers and one prototype model. However, Indonesia has contributed only around 380 billion won to date, leading to its request for a reduction in its financial obligation. The ROK Defence Acquisition Programme Administration approved the plan, taking into account bilateral relations and the possibility of compensating for the deficit. The South Korean government and Korea Aerospace Industries Ltd, the manufacturer, will shoulder the shortfall, with the government covering a larger portion. Technology transfers to Indonesia will be adjusted within the revised 600 billion won range. The allocation of a prototype model will be discussed in future negotiations, with additional contributions from Indonesia required if the value exceeds the new contribution. Despite delays, the KF-21 project remains on track, with plans to deliver the advanced fighter jets, for replacing South Korea's ageing F-4 and F-5 jets, to the Air Force by 2026.

20th	Rath Many, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, led a Cambodian delegation to the 12th Mekong-ROK Business Forum in Vientiane. The forum, themed “Capacity Building of SMEs to Enhance Connectivity in the Mekong Region”, was co-organised by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR and South Korea to strengthen public-private partnerships and offer opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Mekong region and South Korea to form business linkages and explore potential partnerships. During the panel discussion, a representative from Cambodia's Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation presented the status of Cambodian SMEs, highlighting the National Strategy for the Development of the Informal Economy (2023-2028), which includes tax incentives and exemptions for SMEs that voluntarily register.
20th	Han Jae Song was appointed as the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the DPRK to the Kingdom of Thailand.
20th	Prime Minister Hun Manet met Jang Yon Gon, ambassador of the DPRK to Cambodia, during a courtesy call at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh. Jang reflected on the longstanding relationship between North Korea and Cambodia, which was cherished by Kim Il-sung and King Norodom Sihanouk. As this year marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations, the ambassador expressed his commitment to further strengthening and expanding cooperation. He also praised Cambodia's rapid development and achievements under Hun Manet's leadership. The prime minister thanked Jang for his role in fostering bilateral ties and encouraged continued collaboration with Cambodia's relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
20th-23rd	South Korea and Malaysia resumed formal negotiations for a bilateral FTA in Kuala Lumpur from 20 to 23 August, their first official talks since 2019. Led by Director General Peob-min Ryu from Korea and Malaysia's Senior Director Sumathi Balakrishnan from MITI, the discussions expanded to include working groups on services, investment, digital, green and bio sectors. Given Malaysia's role as South Korea's key trade and investment partner within ASEAN and their complementary trade in resources and technology, the FTA is expected to strengthen Korea's trade and investment ties across the region.
21st	South Korea's GG56 Korea Ltd committed to investing US\$1 billion in Forest City, Malaysia, to develop Malaysia's first Korean Culture Town. This initiative follows the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Forest City's master developer, Country Garden Pacificview Sdn Bhd (CGPV). The project will feature K-Content Production Studios, an international Cultural District and a world-class residential development. CGPV Executive Director Datuk Md Othman Yusof stated that the MOA represents a significant milestone for Forest City, reinforcing its role as a global hub for innovation, culture and sustainable growth. He expressed excitement about collaborating with GG56 Korea to bring these transformative projects to life, creating a city that embodies innovation, culture and sustainability. The agreement was signed by Md Othman on behalf of CGPV, with GG56 Korea represented by CEO and co-founder Kim Young Kun and Chung Dong Wan, chairman of CMK Consortium, a subsidiary of GG56 Korea.
22nd	Kim Jong Un, president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, accepted the credentials of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Laos to the DPRK Keo Mackhaphon. Choe Ryong Hae, first vice-president of the State Affairs Commission and chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly, formally received the credentials from Keo at the Mansudae Assembly Hall. DPRK Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Sang Gil, other officials and staff members of the Lao Embassy were also in attendance.
26th	General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and State President To Lam met Commissioner General of the Korea Coast Guard (KCG) Kim Jong-uk, in Hanoi. To Lam praised the growing Vietnam-ROK relationship, particularly following the upgrade to a comprehensive strategic partnership in December 2022, and highlighted the effective cooperation between the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and KCG. To Lam urged both sides to strengthen collaboration through regular delegation exchanges, specific cooperation plans and capacity building for the waterway police. Kim emphasised the importance of security cooperation and pledged to further enhance collaboration between the MPS and KCG for the benefit of both nations.
26th	The Seventh ASEAN Plus Three Education Ministers Meeting was held in Buriram, Thailand, alongside the Seventh East Asia Summit Education Ministers Meeting. Preceding this, the 14th ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on Education took place on 24 August. Co-chaired by Thai Education Minister Police General Permpoon Chidchob and Japan's Senior Deputy Minister Yano Kazuhiko, the meeting reviewed the strengthened partnerships between ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea, guided by the ASEAN Plus Three Plan of Action on Education 2018–2025. Thailand and Japan began their terms as 2024-2025 co-chairs.

26th Aug-6th Sep	The multinational joint military exercise, Exercise Super Garuda Shield 2024, took place in Indonesia, co-hosted by the Indonesian National Defence Forces and the United States Indo-Pacific Command. The third edition of this exercise involved assets and personnel from Indonesia, the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Observing nations included Brazil, Brunei, Fiji, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Vanuatu. This year's event included a new Cyber Exercise in Surabaya to address cyber threats, and the debut of the US Chinook CH-47 helicopters in Indonesia. The exercise serves as a crucial platform for promoting friendship, mutual understanding and professional exchanges among the participating armed forces.
27th	The Ambassador of the DPRK to Singapore Ri Kil Song presented his credentials to Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam in a ceremony at the Istana. Prior to his appointment as DPRK Ambassador to Singapore, Ambassador Ri served as vice-minister for Asian and Oceanian Affairs at the DPRK's Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2014 to 2024. He held various significant roles, including ambassador-at-large from 2012 to 2014 and director-general of the Policy Research and Translation Department during the two terms. Ambassador Ri began his career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1988 and has also served at the DPRK Embassy in Cambodia. He holds a Masters degree in International Relations from the University of International Relations in Pyongyang and speaks French.
28th	The 18th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) was held in Vientiane. Chaired by Lao PDR and themed "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience", the meeting focused on addressing current and emerging transnational crime. The meeting reviewed recent crime trends, progress on the ASEAN Plan of Action (2016-2025) and adopted several outcome documents, including a Declaration and Joint Statement. Malaysia was welcomed as the next AMMTC chair in 2025, with consultations with China, Japan and South Korea scheduled for the following day.
28th	The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF) of South Korea held a policy consultation on the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) with Cambodia's Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology and Ministry of Public Works and Transport in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This consultation, following the Korea-Cambodia summit in May, aimed to implement EDCF measures discussed during the summit, such as logistics infrastructure, climate change response and ICT projects. The two countries recently expanded the EDCF framework to \$3 billion for 2022-2030, enabling support for large-scale infrastructure projects. An On-Site EDCF Procurement Workshop took place with about 80 participants, including procurement officials and MOEF representatives, from 29 to 30 August to train Cambodian officials on EDCF procurement procedures and Korea's advanced procurement policies. The workshop is part of a broader initiative by MOEF to strengthen EDCF project execution across four countries this year to enhance support effectiveness and Korean firms' international presence.
28th	Vietnam National Assembly Vice-Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Thanh met South Korea's Minister of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Startups Oh Young Joo in Hanoi. Thanh called for strengthened economic cooperation, increased trade and support for Vietnamese businesses to integrate into global supply chains, particularly within Korea's business ecosystem. She also advocated for human resources training in high-tech fields, proposed symbolic, long-term bilateral projects and enhanced defence cooperation. Thanh requested support for opening a Vietnamese Consulate in Busan and establishing a cultural centre in South Korea. Oh expressed hopes for deeper cooperation, especially between SMEs, and pledged to support technology transfer and innovation. She highlighted a new policy to help international students secure long-term employment in South Korea, aiming to boost human resources collaboration and trade ties.
29th	The Fifth ASEAN Plus ROK Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime was held in Vientiane, co-chaired by Thailand and South Korea. The meeting reviewed progress on the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime-ROK Work Plan (2019-2025) to combat transnational crime. On the same day, ministers from ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea met for the 14th ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, where they discussed enhancing cooperation under the ASEAN Plus Three Work Plan (2024-2027). Secretary-General of ASEAN Dr Kao Kim Hourn also met Roh Man Sok, chief prosecutor of South Korea's Supreme Prosecutors' Office, to encourage practical initiatives for addressing transnational crime. Timor-Leste participated as an observer in these discussions.
29th	Paisan Rupanichkij, deputy permanent secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, met Lee Jang-keun, ambassador of the ROK to ASEAN, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed ASEAN-ROK cooperation, particularly in the context of Thailand's role as country coordinator for ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations from 2024 to 2027. They also reviewed preparations for the upcoming 25th ASEAN-ROK Summit, commemorating the 35th anniversary of dialogue relations, scheduled for October 2024 in Vientiane. Additionally, they exchanged views on bilateral matters and regional developments.

September 2024

3rd	Party General Secretary and State President To Lam held virtual talks with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol to strengthen the Vietnam-South Korea partnership. Yoon offered condolences for Nguyen Phu Trong's passing and affirmed confidence in Vietnam's success under Lam's leadership. The two leaders committed to boosting political trust through exchanges, enhancing cooperation in security, defence and economic sectors, and setting a trade goal of \$150 billion by 2030. They also pledged to expand cooperation in labour, culture, tourism and education, while supporting citizens in each country. They agreed on regional collaboration, Vietnam's role in peace on the Korean Peninsula and adherence to international law in the East Sea. Yoon invited To Lam to visit South Korea.
3rd-5th	Brunei Darussalam and South Korea explored collaborative efforts to address public transport challenges during a bilateral meeting between Brunei's Minister of Transport and Infocommunications Pengiran Dato Seri Setia Shamhary bin Pengiran Dato Paduka Haji Mustapha and South Korea's Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Sangwoo Park. The meeting, held on the sidelines of the World Smart City Expo 2024 in Goyang, focused on sharing best practices and strategies for advancing smart transportation management, including policy frameworks, legislation and transport efficiency. Brunei's delegation, including Ambassador Pengiran Hajah Noorayah, and senior officials, also visited the expo and related facilities to explore smart transportation solutions. Additionally, the second Joint Coordination Committee meeting, co-chaired by South Korea's Deputy Minister Lee Sangjoo, aimed to enhance bilateral cooperation under the smart city development memorandum. A token of appreciation was presented to Brunei in recognition of the strong partnership in the effort to foster smart city growth.
7th	A delegation from the DPRK Foreign Ministry, led by Vice-Minister Pak Sang Gil, departed Pyongyang for an official visit to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Indonesia.
9-10th	Pak Sang Gil, North Korea's deputy minister for Foreign Affairs, met Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son and held talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Pham Thanh Binh during his official visit to Hanoi on 9 and 10 September respectively. Son emphasised the importance of strengthening high-level exchanges and enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation. Both sides agreed to prepare for the anniversary and explore new avenues for collaboration in compliance with international regulations. Pak praised Vietnam's progress and global standing, while the two diplomats exchanged views on regional and international issues of shared interest. Binh reaffirmed Vietnam's commitment to its friendship with North Korea and expressed hopes for deeper cooperation to promote peace and development. Pak highlighted that bilateral relations have advanced since Kim Jong-un's 2019 visit to Vietnam and reaffirmed North Korea's dedication to further strengthening ties. During his visit, Pak also toured local sites, including the President Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum.
9-10th	The Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) Summit 2024, co-organised by the ROK MOFA and Ministry of National Defence, was held. The summit was attended by over 2,000 participants, including government delegations from more than 90 countries. Key attendees included South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun and heads of delegation from co-host nations: the Netherlands - Mr Ruben Brekelmans, minister of defence; Singapore - Dr Ng Eng Hen, minister of defence; Kenya - Ms Roselinda Soipan Tuyu, minister of defence; and the United Kingdom - Mr Paul Lincoln, second permanent secretary of defence. ROK Foreign Minister Cho and Defence Minister Kim delivered opening and welcoming remarks, while Dutch Defence Minister Brekelmans gave congratulatory remarks on behalf of the co-hosts. On the sidelines of the REAIM summit, Kim met Singaporean Defence Minister Ng. Kim invited Singapore's interest in South Korea's weapons systems and expressed gratitude for Singapore's support for South Korea's policy on North Korea. Ng affirmed Singapore's commitment to regional peace and stability, including on the Korean Peninsula.
10th	The Korean Cultural Association (KCA) sought Cambodian government support for youth exchange programmes to foster cultural understanding between Cambodian and South Korean youth. During a meeting in South Korea, KCA President Samuel Chung and Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen agreed on the importance of such exchanges. KCA plans to host a charity night in Seoul on 26 September for Cambodia's Samdech Techo Youth Volunteer Doctors Association and future events in Siem Reap that showcase Korean culture. Hun also met Oh Chang-seok, president of Mugungwha Trust Co Ltd, to discuss potential investments in Cambodia. Oh expressed strong interest, particularly in the insurance sector.

10th	Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, president of the Senate of Cambodia, met Woo Won-Shik, speaker of the National Assembly of South Korea, at the Korean National Assembly Building in Seoul. During a working lunch hosted by Kim Jin-pyo, former speaker of the National Assembly, Korean companies expressed interest in investing in Cambodia, particularly in human resource training in technology and EVs. Charles Lee, board chairman of Korea Polytechnics University, and Park Joo-bong, director general of Camko Motor and Camko Infracore, participated in the discussion. The former speaker emphasised that the investors aim to strengthen Cambodia's economy through modern technology and EV assembly plants for local and export markets. Samdech Techo Hun Sen welcomed these plans and encouraged collaboration with the royal government. He also requested Korea's involvement in the government's initiative to provide training to 1.5 million Cambodian youth from disadvantaged households.
10-11th	The 2024 International Conference on Narcotics (ICON) was held on Sebitseom Island, Seoul to enhance international cooperation in combating drug-related crimes. The two-day event saw the attendance of around 200 officials from 32 countries, including the United States, Vietnam, Australia and Cambodia, along with four international organisations. Since 2010, the Korean National Police Agency (KNPA) has hosted ICON to strengthen global collaboration among investigative agencies in tackling drug crimes. This year's participants will share insights on drug crime trends, methods and major drug criminals. Additionally, the KNPA, in partnership with 13 Asia-Pacific countries, including Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia and India, and ASEAN chiefs of police, will launch the Asian Narcotics Crime Response Alliance, a new consultative body for rapid drug-related information sharing.
11th	The Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the ambassadors of China, Japan and South Korea to ASEAN met for the 21st CPR Plus Three Meeting. They reviewed progress on implementing the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Cooperation Work Plan (2023-2027), discussed future APT cooperation and prepared for the upcoming 27th APT Summit in October 2024. The meeting was co-chaired by Ambassador Bovonethat Douangchak of Lao PDR and Ambassador Kiya Masahiko of Japan, with Timor Leste attending as an observer alongside representatives from APT countries and ASEAN Secretariat.
11th	Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen requested South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol to consider upgrading Cambodia-South Korea relations to a "comprehensive strategic partnership" within the next three years, as the two nations are preparing to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. The request was made during a meeting held on the sidelines of the World Knowledge Forum in Seoul. Hun Sen emphasised the importance of further strengthening ties, building on the recent elevation of the bilateral relationship to a "strategic partnership" during Prime Minister Hun Manet's visit to Seoul in May.
12th	The Asian Cultural Council (ACC) of Cambodia and South Korea's Gyeongsangbuk-do provinces signed an "MOU on New Village Movement Cooperation" to promote rural development in Cambodia. The signing ceremony was attended by Cambodian Senate President and ACC Honorary Founding Chairman Hun Sen and Governor Lee Cheol-woo. The MOU focuses on fostering friendship and cooperation through the exchange of experiences in rural development and South Korea's New Village Movement. Under the agreement, various rural development projects will be implemented, such as smart farm establishment, mechanised farming and agricultural support systems, along with public health initiatives like mobile physician services and operation of healthcare centres. The MOU also aims to establish a vocational training school, expand human resource exchanges between universities, offer scholarships for New Village Movement studies and create a New Village Movement centre focused on training. Other cooperation efforts will cover AI, digital sectors and cultural exchange programmes.
12th	The government of the ROK pledged US\$2 million in humanitarian aid to Vietnam to assist in relief efforts following the recent typhoon and heavy rainfall, which caused significant devastation. As of 11 September, 152 people were reported dead and 140 missing. The Korean government expressed hope that this will aid in the recovery of the affected areas and help residents quickly return to their normal lives.
12th	Som Visal, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, met Kim Hyun Soo, the newly appointed deputy chief of the Mission of the Embassy of the ROK to Cambodia. Som congratulated Kim on his new role and wished him good health and success. Their discussion focused on strengthening cooperation in key areas, including trade, investment and tourism.
14th - 17th	Pak Sang Gil, vice-minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, visited Thailand as part of a Southeast Asia tour. During his visit, he held a bilateral meeting with Busadee Santipitaks, deputy permanent secretary for Foreign Affairs, where they discussed mutual bilateral interests and exchanged views on regional developments. The DPRK delegation also visited the Siriraj Applied Thai Traditional Medicine, Faculty of Medicine at Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University, to learn about Thai traditional medicine.

15-16th	The Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment of Timor-Leste Rogério Araújo Mendonça made an official visit to South Korea. Accompanied by Timor-Leste's Ambassador to South Korea Gregório de Sousa and Cardinal Dom Virgílio do Carmo da Silva, secretary of state, they engaged with Timorese workers in a spirit of dialogue and community-building. On 15 September in Seoul, the delegation was warmly welcomed at a cultural celebration by Timorese workers. A baptism ceremony, led by Cardinal Dom Virgílio, saw the participation of 321 workers and their children, followed by a communal dinner that reinforced the bonds within the community. The following day, Mendonça attended a dialogue with workers in Asan during the 14th anniversary celebrations of the Amicus Association. He commended the Union of Timor-Leste Workers in South Korea for its vital role in supporting the community, particularly in addressing health, employment and labour-related issues.
16th	Ke Sovann, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, held a bilateral meeting with Jang Yun Gon, ambassador of the DPRK to Cambodia. They discussed human rights issues within the UN framework and highlighted the significance of peaceful dialogue and diplomacy in promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula.
17th	Secretary-General of ASEAN Dr Kao Kim Hourn met Gan Kim Yong, Singapore's deputy prime minister and minister for Trade and Industry, on the sidelines of the 56th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in Vientiane. They discussed the ongoing upgrade of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement and the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Area, which Singapore chairs, as well as strategic measures to prepare ASEAN for its transformative future under the Post-2025 Strategic Plan.
18th	The Republic of Indonesia and the DPRK reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and expanding mutually beneficial cooperation during a meeting between Indonesia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Pahala Nugraha Mansury and DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Sang Gil in Jakarta. The two sides expressed enthusiasm for reviving delegation exchanges to pre-pandemic levels, focusing on youth exchanges and international development cooperation. They also discussed regional peace, stability and cooperation within ASEAN-led platforms. This marked Pak's first visit to Indonesia since 2015.
18th	SK Group, a major South Korean conglomerate, announced a \$300,000 donation to support Vietnam's recovery from Typhoon Yagi, which recently caused extensive flooding, leaving nearly 300 dead and dozens missing. The relief funds will be delivered later this month to aid affected regions. SK Group, which collaborates with Vietnamese companies like Vingroup and Masan Group, committed to helping Vietnam rebuild in the wake of the disaster.
18-19th	Vietnamese military officials, led by Deputy Defence Minister Hoang Xuan Chien, visited North Korea at the invitation of North Korea's Ministry of Defence to hold talks aimed at expanding defence cooperation. On 18 September, Chien met his North Korean counterpart, Kim Min Sop, in Pyongyang to discuss defence policies and ways to strengthen military ties, as reported by the Vietnamese People's Army Newspaper. During the talks, the two sides agreed to enhance collaboration in areas such as border defence, the defence industry, military technology, research and information sharing, while stressing the importance of political and party work in fortifying defence relations. Future cooperation in training, military healthcare, cultural exchanges and high-level delegation visits was discussed as well. The Vietnamese delegation also visited a special operations unit of the Korean People's Army. Chien extended invitations to North Korean officials, including Kim Min Sop and the head of the KPA's General Political Bureau, to attend the 80th anniversary of the Vietnam People's Army and the Vietnam International Defence Expo later this year. On 19 September, Chien also paid a courtesy call to North Korean Defence Minister Kang Sun Nam, extending a similar invitation to him. As a gesture of goodwill, Chien presented a photo of Vietnam's founding leader Ho Chi Minh and North Korea's Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Un through Kang. The two sides discussed the current state of their defence cooperation and plans to boost ties in the future.
19th	Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Socio-Cultural Community Ekkaphab Phanthavong received a courtesy visit from DPRK Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Sang Gil at the ASEAN Secretariat. They exchanged views on strengthening ASEAN-DPRK relations and discussed developments on the Korean Peninsula.
21st	The delegation from the DPRK Foreign Ministry, led by Vice-Minister Pak Sang Gil, returned to Pyongyang following their visits to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Indonesia.

21st	Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh met Ambassador Ri Sung Guk of the DPRK and congratulated him on his appointment. Chinh expressed appreciation for the DPRK's decision to send a seasoned diplomat to Vietnam, highlighting the importance the DPRK places on its cooperative relationship with Vietnam. He assured Ambassador Ri of close cooperation from Vietnamese agencies to help him fulfil his duties and expressed confidence that the ambassador's experience would contribute to strengthening the traditional friendship between the two nations. Chinh praised the long-standing bilateral friendship and suggested further enhancing of political trust and mutual understanding through delegations and cooperation between ministries. He also recommended that the two countries coordinate activities to celebrate the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2025, while promoting economic cooperation in compliance with international law. Chinh called for the resumption of the Vietnam-DPRK Intergovernmental Committee meetings and encouraged expanded cultural, artistic, sports and people-to-people exchanges. Ri expressed his admiration for Vietnam's socio-economic achievements and post-pandemic recovery, praising the country's growing international standing. He voiced confidence that under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the country would achieve its goal of becoming a high-income developed nation by 2045. Ri reaffirmed the DPRK's commitment to advancing bilateral relations with Vietnam.
21st	Dr Kao Kim Hourn, secretary-general of ASEAN, met Inkyo Cheong, ROK minister for trade, on the sidelines of the 56th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting. They discussed the progress of the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Area (AKFTA), plans for upgrading the AKFTA, and additional measures aimed at strengthening ASEAN-Korea economic relations.
21st	ROK Minister for Trade Inkyo Cheong participated in the 56th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting and related events in Vientiane, where he discussed key economic topics for the upcoming 44th ASEAN Summit in October. As part of ongoing efforts tied to the ROK Trade Policy Roadmap launched in August, he emphasised strengthening cooperation with ASEAN and Global South nations. At the 12th East Asia Summit Economic Ministers Meeting on the same day, Cheong advocated for collaborative approaches to tackle complex trade issues like supply chains, digital transition and climate change, which are challenging for individual countries to address alone.
22nd	The third RCEP Ministers' Meeting was held in Vientiane, co-chaired by Djatmiko Bris Witjaksono, Indonesia's Director General of International Trade Negotiations, and Li Fei, China's vice-minister of commerce. On the same day, the 21st ASEAN Economic Ministers-ROK Consultation was held, co-chaired by Malaithong Kommasith, Lao PDR's minister of industry and Commerce, and Inkyo Cheong, ROK minister for trade. Cheong reviewed various Korea-ASEAN initiatives, such as upgrading the Korea-ASEAN FTA, expanding the Korea-ASEAN Startup Policy Dialogue, establishing electrical safety infrastructure and enhancing standards cooperation. Marking the 35th anniversary of Korea-ASEAN dialogue relations, he proposed launching the Korea-ASEAN Think Tank Dialogue in 2025 for ongoing economic consultations, an idea which was warmly welcomed by ASEAN members. The 27th ASEAN Economic Ministers Plus Three Consultation was also held, co-chaired by Kommasith, Li Fei, Yoshida Nobuhiro of Japan, and Cheong. Cheong highlighted the need for collaborating on a stable supply chain among Korea, China and Japan, and providing multilateral trade support amidst global economic challenges.
24th	Kim Song Nam, director of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), met Keo Mackhaphon, ambassador of Lao PDR to the DPRK, at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang. During the courtesy call, they had a friendly discussion, with officials from the WPK's International Department and staff members of the Lao Embassy also in attendance.
25th	South Korea's foreign ministry announced a humanitarian aid package of US\$500,000 to assist Laos in recovering from severe floods caused by Typhoon Yagi. The disaster has resulted in over 380 fatalities and displaced at least 176,000 people across northern and central Laos. The Korean government expressed hope that the aid will support recovery efforts and help the affected communities to resume daily life swiftly.
25-27th	ROK Trade Minister Inkyo Cheong met Thai Deputy Commerce Minister Suchart Chomklin during the second round of Korea-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations held in Seoul. Cheong encouraged a forward-looking approach in the talks to shape a trade agreement aligned with the evolving global trade landscape, aimed at strengthening bilateral economic cooperation.

26th	The South Korean Embassy in Cambodia celebrated Korean National Day with a grand reception at the Sofitel Hotel in Phnom Penh to showcase the strong and growing relationship between the two nations. Over 400 attendees, including diplomats, Cambodian government officials, and members of the Korean community in Cambodia, participated in the event. South Korean Ambassador Park Jung-wook welcomed guests and emphasised South Korea's commitment to deepening bilateral ties. He expressed optimism for future cooperation, particularly as Cambodia advances towards its 2030 development goals, and encouraged the two countries to further strengthen their partnership.
27th	The 21st ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting Plus Three was held in Vientiane and chaired by Phosay Sayasone, minister of energy and mines of Lao PDR, with Timor-Leste as an observer. The meeting emphasised the need to strengthen regional energy connectivity and resilience amidst global challenges. The participants expressed appreciation for Lao PDR's leadership in enhancing regional cooperation and proactively addressing emerging energy challenges, while also advancing a sustainable and stable energy future for the region. The 18th East Asia Summit Energy Ministers Meeting, chaired by Sayasone, was held on the same day. The meeting acknowledged the region's growing energy challenges, such as rising demand, energy security concerns and the need to reduce carbon emissions. The ministers agreed on transitioning to cleaner energy sources while maintaining energy security, affordability and accessibility.
27th	In Hanoi, Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Tan Cuong, chief of the general staff of the Vietnam People's Army, met General Lee Young Su, chief of staff of South Korea's Air Force. Cuong praised the steady progress in defence cooperation, including education, maritime security, war recovery and UN peacekeeping. He reaffirmed Vietnam's commitment to supporting enhanced collaboration between the two countries' air forces, aiming for more substantive and sustainable cooperation. General Lee shared outcomes from his earlier meeting with Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Hien and expressed confidence in the continued growth of the bilateral defence relationship.
28th	Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh welcomed KNPA Commissioner General Cho Ji-ho in Hanoi, praising the effective cooperation between Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security and the KNPA, particularly in information exchange and training. Chinh urged further cooperation to deepen political trust and enhance ties, especially in economic and labour areas, and requested support for a visa waiver for Vietnamese citizens. Cho, on his first overseas trip in this role, emphasised the importance of bilateral relations and pledged to strengthen ties. He also called for Vietnam to ensure a safe environment for Korean citizens and businesses, while South Korea would likewise ensure the security of Vietnamese citizens in the country.
29th	Vietnamese Minister of Public Security Senior Lieutenant General Luong Tam Quang held talks with Commissioner General of the KNPA Cho Ji-ho, in Hanoi. Quang praised the success of the second Vietnam-ROK police cultural and sport exchange programme, emphasising its role in strengthening ties between the two police forces. He also thanked the KNPA for inviting the Ministry of Public Security to the sixth Vietnam-ROK Police Cooperation Conference, confirming plans to send representatives. Cho expressed confidence in deepening cooperation between the two forces to further elevate the Vietnam-ROK comprehensive strategic partnership. The two sides agreed to continue supporting each other at regional and international forums, enhance collaboration in combating transnational and high-tech crimes, and strengthen joint efforts in crime prevention. They also agreed to implement joint projects to boost criminal science and traffic policing capacities from 2025 to 2028, organise training courses in South Korea for Vietnamese officers, and ensure the security and safety of citizens in the two countries. Cultural and sport exchanges, as well as local-level police cooperation, will also be promoted.

This chronology of events is cross-referenced from the following ministries, institutions and news sources:

The ASEAN Secretariat; The ASEAN-Korea Centre; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao People's Democratic Republic; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia; The Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore; The Government of Timor-Leste; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea; The Ministry of Economy of Finance of the Republic of Korea; Channel News Asia; The Borneo Bulletin; Khmer Times; Phnom Penh Post; The Jakarta Post; Laos News Agency; The Star; The Philippine News Agency; The Straits Times; Bangkok Post; Vietnam News Agency; Vietnam Plus; The Korean Central News Agency; NK News; Yonhap News Agency; and The Korea Times.