

President Yoon's Botched Martial Law Declaration: Causes and Consequences

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President Yoon Suk Yeol's martial law declaration on the night of 3 December 2024 was a bolt out of the blue that plunged South Korea into uncharted waters and a prolonged political crisis. Indeed, Yoon's reckless and feckless political gamble shook the foundations of Korean liberal democracy and governance. Hitherto, the last declaration of martial law was in December 1979 when the country came under a harsh military dictatorship following the assassination of then President Park Chung-hee. However, South Korea democratised following the 1987 Democracy Movement.

That Yoon shockingly despatched elite troops to suspend parliament, ban all political activities and crush press freedom under martial law was unimaginable and bewildering to many South Koreans. After all, their country is a successful G-20 middle power — an affluent and seemingly stable liberal democracy with mesmerising cultural soft power in the world — and not a third world banana republic of military coups. Though Yoon lifted his martial law in six hours after a majority of enraged national assembly members voted against it, this merely marked the “end of the beginning” of an intense political struggle between the ruling and opposition parties with both sides mobilising mass demonstrations in the streets.

The presidential coup d'état against the opposition-controlled unicameral national assembly was a democratic backsliding that negatively impacted the won exchange

rates and stock market and dented the country's good image and public diplomacy globally. Subsequently, parliament, with a two-thirds majority, impeached and suspended Yoon as president. According to the ROK (Republic of Korea) constitution, the constitutional court will decide whether to reinstate or remove him from the presidency within 180 days. If the constitutional court were to uphold the impeachment of Yoon, a presidential election will take place in no more than 60 days.

Causes

The causes of Yoon's martial law fiasco and its consequences are interconnected. Yoon is primarily responsible for abusing the power of an “imperial” presidency to declare martial law. Under Article 77 of the ROK constitution, a president can unilaterally declare martial law in case of “war, armed conflict, or similar national emergencies that threaten national security or public safety”.

According to Yoon, he did it to protect South Korea from “North Korean communist forces” and “anti-state forces”, and to “rebuild and protect” the country from “falling into ruin”. However, no war or its equivalent crisis was imminent that necessitates the declaration of martial law. Though Yoon is obliged to inform the cabinet of his decision to declare martial law, the cabinet cannot veto the presidential

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decision to declare martial law. This is a constitutional design flaw as it entrusts the president with unilateral power to declare martial law.

Arguably, the declaration was an act of political desperation, frustration and gross miscalculation after Yoon became a “lame duck” when his ruling People Power Party (PPP: a conservative, right-wing party) lost the 2024 April parliamentary election. As a self-righteous, former public prosecutor and political novice who had never held an elected office before, his relations with the main opposition Democratic Party of Korea (DPK: a liberal-progressive, left-wing party) were frosty and acrimonious.

Trust, communication and compromise were sorely lacking between the Yoon presidency and the opposition-dominated national assembly. The DPK in parliament impeached many of Yoon's top officials and slashed the budget while Yoon vetoed many of the legislations passed by parliament. The DPK was also hell bent to prosecute the First Lady for allegations of corruption and misconduct. Not surprisingly, Yoon sought to protect his wife and retaliate against her tormentors. To Yoon, the opposition exercises the tyranny of the majority in the legislature to undermine the executive leading to political gridlock. The declaration of martial law was, therefore, Yoon's high-stake gambit to cut the Gordian knot in domestic politics by striking down the opposition in a single stroke. However, this strategy backfired disastrously.

It is indeed shocking that Yoon and his advisers could misread so badly the national sentiments and underestimated the inevitable push back from the DPK and the public against martial law. Apparently, Yoon was in an echo chamber where some of his acolytes shared his thinking, clandestinely planned and supported his martial law declaration. They include chums and cronies such as former Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun, Interior Minister Lee Sang-min and Defence Counter-intelligence Commander Yeo In-hyung who graduated from the same elite Chungam High School in Seoul as Yoon.

There are also unproven allegations that some members of Yoon's inner circle sought to provoke the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) into a conflict such as shooting down North Korean southbound trash balloons and striking the launch sites of these balloons on the other side of the Korean demilitarised zone. Some conspiracy theorists suggested the bizarre logic that if the DPRK is lured into a conflict, this would justify President Yoon's declaration of martial law to crush the “pro-North Korea” elements from within the ROK.

During the martial law saga, North Korea was extremely cautious and mostly silent on the political crisis in the south to avoid entanglement in a dangerous vortex not of its own making. These allegations, wild or otherwise, are now under investigation.

Undoubtedly, a showdown and a political stalemate between the executive and legislative was perhaps inevitable but a martial law declaration was not. Ultimately, the responsibility rests with the president. In this sense, Yoon is primarily responsible for triggering the martial law crisis even if he had been ill advised by some counsellors and confidantes. He appeared to have committed political suicide by declaring martial law opposed by parliament and most of the public.

The martial law declaration took place within the context of a South Korean elite political culture, characterised by political confrontation and vendetta. Clearly, the Korean style of unrestrained politics and vicious cycle of reprisals does not compel Yoon to declare martial law. If Yoon is politically shrewd, he would have fought his domestic political battles differently and not made the fateful and fatal decision of declaring martial law.

Arguably, Lee Jae-myung, assembly member and leader of the opposition DPK, and his parliamentary supporters too have contributed to these norms and patterns of bitter and vicious politics. Lee narrowly lost to Yoon in the 2022 presidential election. However, Lee is under a cloud with four court trials (including several criminal charges such as bribery and corruption) against him. In one of these cases, the judge pronounced a guilty verdict against Lee for violating election law and sentenced him to a one-year prison term, suspended for two years. If Lee loses his appeal, he will be required to relinquish his parliamentary seat and barred from running for any elections for the next five years. In this scenario, a guilty verdict would be tantamount to an end to his political career and presidential ambitions.

Apparently, Lee believes that the Yoon administration has weaponised the

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SOUTH KOREA MAY EVENTUALLY SEEK CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM OF THE “IMPERIAL” PRESIDENCY WITH A MAXIMUM OF TWO FOUR-YEAR TERMS INSTEAD OF A SINGLE FIVE-YEAR TERM.

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public prosecutors against him. Lee’s strategy of political survival and triumph is for the constitutional court to endorse promptly Yoon’s impeachment. If Lee were to win the presidential election before a guilty sentence is passed by the courts in any of the cases, then he will escape from criminal charges. This is because the ROK president enjoys broad immunity during his term of office except for treason, leaking state secrets and insurrection. Lee succeeded in impeaching Acting President and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo (14 to 27 December 2024) in parliament for allegedly dragging his feet on appointing another three judges to the constitutional court to approve Yoon’s impeachment.

The constitutional court is supposed to have nine presiding judges, but there are only eight at the time of writing, two of whom will be retiring by April 2025. The constitutional court requires a minimum of seven justices to deliberate cases and mandates the approval of six justices for impeachment decisions. For Lee and the DPK, having only six judges in the constitutional court to decide on the impeachment is too precarious. It requires only one out of the six judges to reject impeachment and Yoon would be reinstated president.

Lee has threatened to impeach “Acting Acting” President, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Choi Sang-mok if the latter does not swiftly appoint judges nominated by the legislature to the constitutional court (Choi succeeded Acting President and Prime Minister Han after the latter’s impeachment). Thus far, Choi has appointed another two judges but has insisted that the third nominated judge must be agreeable to both the DPK and PPP in parliament. If Lee and the DPK were to continue their brinksmanship with the Cabinet by impeaching acting presidents in swift succession, South Korea’s crisis in governance will deepen.

Competing South Korean political elites also draw their electoral support from regions with different ideological tendencies, rivalries and identities. Yoon and the ruling PPP have strong electoral support from the politically conservative localities of Daegu city and Gyeongsang province while the DPK are strong in the liberal-progressive leaning region of Gwangju city and Cholla province. Regional stereotypes and prejudices worsened during the era of strongman President Park Chung-hee who channelled resources for economic development to his home province of Gyeongsang to secure electoral support while neglecting Cholla province (Seoul, the national capital, draws residents from all regions of South Korea with diverse political values, interests and identities).

Consequences

Currently, South Korea is politically rudderless with “Acting, Acting President” Choi threatened with impeachment by the opposition DPK in the national assembly if he does not yield to their various demands. A leadership vacuum is challenging because there is no top political leader with gravitas to deal with the second Trump administration that may slap tariffs, demand a hike in defence spending and threaten to reduce the number of US troops in South Korea meant to deter North Korea.

Possible scenarios may include the purges of some commanders of the ROK military and police who obeyed the Commander-in-Chief Yoon to impose martial law. This will be problematic if there is a destabilising “witch hunt” against the military, police, the bureaucracy and public prosecutors. If the constitutional court does not rescind the impeachment of Yoon, he will be stripped of the presidency and is likely to go to jail for “treason and insurrection”. If this scenario pans out, Yoon and PPP supporters would be furious and aggrieved because they would have lost two conservative presidents (including Park Geun-hye) due to impeachment in recent times. This could further polarise South Korean domestic politics.

If Lee Jae-myung were to win the next presidential election, he may distance his administration from Japan due to emotive historical and territorial disputes, engage North Korea to avoid conflict and improve relations with China, South Korea’s most important economic partner. Lee will support US President Donald Trump if the latter were to reach out to DPRK supremo Kim Jong-Un again for another summit.

South Korea may eventually seek constitutional reform of the “imperial” presidency with a maximum of two four-year terms instead of a single five-year term. The constitutional amendment may bar future ROK presidents from unilaterally declaring martial law or require the prior approval of cabinet and parliament before it can take place.

There might be a “silver lining” amidst the hovering dark cloud of political uncertainty. Paradoxically, the unwitting outcome of Yoon’s abortive coup is the strengthening of Korean democracy. The younger generation of South Korea voters, who have never experienced the tyranny of martial law and military rule until the beginning of democratisation in 1987, might well reflect deeper on the meaning and value of democracy. Indeed, many youngsters protested the declaration of martial law and advocated the impeachment of Yoon in social movements. Nonetheless, Yoon still has large numbers of diehard conservative supporters including rightwing Protestant pastors with large congregations and YouTubers who subscribe to conspiracy theories. These theories claim that the progressive DPK are stooges of atheistic, totalitarian North Korea, and that the April 2024 parliamentary elections were rigged.

One can only hope that the on-going mass demonstrations against and in support of Yoon’s impeachment and arrest will remain peaceful. Notwithstanding the tragedy of the botched martial law declaration, South Korea may well learn from this political setback and emerge stronger as a beacon of stability, prosperity and democracy in East Asia.

Note: This article was first published as an EAI Commentary dated 31 January 2025.

South Korea-China Economic and Industrial Cooperation Strategies Amid US-China Competition

CHOO Jaewoo

Professor, Kyung Hee University

US-China competition has characterised the 21st century due to fast global economic and political upheaval, resulting in reduced trade, technology exchange and security cooperation between the two countries. These inclinations push South Korea to enhance political and security ties with the United States while retaining economic ties with China. South Korea's economic edge over China matters.

South Korea exports mostly semiconductors, screens and petrochemicals to China. Korean semiconductors play a big part in China's sophisticated manufacturing supply chain and are crucial for its electronics and IT sectors.

Korean businesses dominate OLED and LCD display technologies, supplying Chinese smartphone and TV makers with high-quality panels.

South Korean petrochemicals also serve China's industrial sector with premium polymers and chemicals. China's advanced industrialisation relies on South Korean parts and technology, while its embrace of Hallyu and K-brands helps promote South Korean culture and services. South Korea's economic power enables it to compete with China and maximise mutual gains. To capitalise on this advantage, South Korea should take the lead in its economic and geopolitical cooperation with China.

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... GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS HAVE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED TRADE BETWEEN CHINA AND SOUTH KOREA. FROM OCTOBER 2022 TO DECEMBER 2023, THERE WAS A \$47 BILLION SOUTH KOREA-CHINA TRADE IMBALANCE IN FAVOUR OF CHINA. ELECTRIC CAR IMPORTS SURGED AND SEMICONDUCTOR EXPORT SURPLUSES DECLINED BY \$9.2 BILLION, ATTRIBUTED LARGELY TO CHINA'S "DUAL CIRCULATION" STRATEGY OF EMPHASISING DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION AND TECHNICAL SELF-RELIANCE. INVESTMENTS LIKEWISE FELL. NEW CHINESE INVESTMENTS IN SOUTH KOREA DIVED 78.1% TO \$1.867 BILLION IN 2023, REACHING EARLY 2000S LEVELS.

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US-China Rivalry and South Korean Economic Policy

Since Trump took office, his agenda of "America First" has heightened US economic competition with China. Supply chain restructuring, technology prohibitions and competitive tariff hikes have hampered South Korea-China economic collaboration. US pressure drove China's "dual circulation (*shuang xunhuan*)" self-sufficiency economic plan. US technology and supply chain developments may dampen China's demand for South Korean goods.

Meanwhile, geopolitical tensions have negatively impacted trade between China and South Korea. From October 2022 to December 2023, there was a \$47 billion South Korea-China trade imbalance in favour of China. Electric car imports surged and semiconductor export surpluses declined by \$9.2 billion, attributed largely to China's "dual circulation" strategy of emphasising domestic consumption and technical self-reliance. Investments likewise fell. New Chinese investments in South Korea dived 78.1% to \$1.867 billion in 2023, reaching early 2000s levels. Semiconductor investment fell 99.8% to \$11 million. As Chinese investment dips to 2.9%, South Korea has to diversify into the US and Vietnamese markets. Factors such as US technology restrictions on China, the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and worsening investment circumstances in China, such as increased labour costs and fewer international investor incentives, have driven this trend.

Despite these obstacles, it is essential to revitalise China-South Korea commercial relations for mutual gains. Growing industries offer more opportunities. As semiconductor and battery strategic ties grow, South Korea could consider partnerships in green technology and cultural content. US-China competition has also placed South Korea in a geopolitical conundrum. As the United States modifies supply chains and controls technology, China establishes an economic bloc and technical independence. Geopolitics evidently affect South Korean chip, battery and AI



AS THE UNITED STATES MODIFIES SUPPLY CHAINS AND CONTROLS TECHNOLOGY, CHINA ESTABLISHES AN ECONOMIC BLOC AND TECHNICAL INDEPENDENCE. GEOPOLITICS EVIDENTLY AFFECT SOUTH KOREAN CHIP, BATTERY AND AI COMPANIES. TO IMPROVE US COLLABORATION, SOUTH KOREA MAY LIMIT TECHNOLOGY EXPORTS TO CHINA, LIMITING THE PROFITABILITY OF CHINA-DEPENDENT SECTORS, ADDING TO MARKET VOLATILITY. TO COMPETE GLOBALLY, SOUTH KOREA WOULD NEED TO BALANCE ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS.



companies. To improve US collaboration, South Korea may limit technology exports to China, limiting the profitability of China-dependent sectors, adding to market volatility. To compete globally, South Korea would need to balance economic and strategic interests.

Economic Strategy of South Korea in the Midst of US-China Rivalry

China is South Korea's major trading partner and economic friend despite US-China tensions. South Korea relies on China's market and manufacturing base as 25% of exports went to China in 2023. To maximise benefits, South Korea would need to maintain economic connections with China. Since Trump took office, US-China competitiveness has spiked. South Korea and China would have to create new commercial and industrial areas to improve cooperation:

1. Improving Advanced Tech Cooperation

As China and South Korea produce batteries, semiconductors and renewable energy, development and sharing of carbon-neutral technologies would be mutually beneficial. Technology and global competitiveness benefit from international research and development (R&D) collaboration. South Korean semiconductor and battery technologies can boost Chinese manufacturing and strengthen ties.

2. Promoting Cooperative Energy, Green Tech

Renewable energy, EV and hydrogen energy are essential for the two countries in their fight against climate change. South Korea can contribute technology and equipment to China's large-scale solar and wind power projects, while China can supply rare earth elements and other resources to South Korea's green technology sector.

3. Increasing Cultural and Service Industry Exchanges

A potential area of cooperation is service and culture, not just industry. China seeks partnerships in Hallyu (Korean Wave) digital content, gaming and tourism. Chinese e-commerce may also enhance K-brand penetration.

4. Reviving Economic-Diplomatic Dialogue

South Korea and China would do well to increase trade amid US-China tensions. Regular conferences on economic and industrial cooperation for corporate and government leaders from both nations would be helpful for building trust and relationships.

South Korea-China Economic Cooperation Exit Strategy

South Korea faces both difficulties and opportunities from tense US-China relations and must navigate cautiously between the two economic powerhouses in this complicated environment. For South Korea's economic prosperity, China's advanced technology, supply networks, services and green technologies are essential.

Conversely, South Korea's semiconductor and battery technology can provide China's manufacturing industry with vital components and technologies, increasing economic interdependence. Collaborative international R&D efforts would fuel the development of next-generation technologies. With China's supply of rare earths and renewable energy, South Korea can enhance its global supply chain.

South Korea's cultural content and digital talents when paired with China's e-commerce platforms can significantly boost the service industry and cultural exchange. This strategic approach allows South Korea to compete with both the United States and China and build its own economy.

Highlights at the Korea Centre



Dr Lam Peng Er presented a paper at the Northeast Asia History Foundation conference in Seoul.



With His Excellency Democratic People's Republic of Korea Ambassador Ri Kil Song.



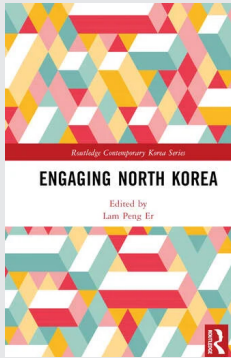
Dr Lam Peng Er at a cultural performance in Seoul.



Discussions with a delegation from the Republic of Korea, Ministry of Reunification.



Recent Publications



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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3. A Basic Framework for Understanding China-North Korea Relations by *Jaewoo CHOO*

Regional Great Powers and the DPRK

4. Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the 21st Century by *Vitaly KOZYREV*
5. Japan and North Korea: Reminders of Forgotten Realities by *Haruko SATOH*

Korean Middle Powers

6. Containment versus Engagement: South Korea's Polarized Politics and Different Approaches to the North Korean Conundrum by *Hahnkyu PARK*
7. North Korea's Relentless Nuclear Path: Advances in Nuclear Capability and Doctrine by *Sung Chull KIM*

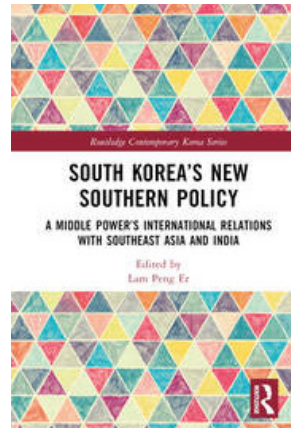
ASEAN Middle Powers

8. Singapore-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Relations: Diplomacy and Humanitarian Assistance by *Gordon KANG*
9. The Vietnam-DPRK Experience: Sharing and Engagement for Peace and Prosperity by *NGUYEN Thi Tham* and *HA Anh Tuan*

Discreet Roles of the European Union, Sweden and Ireland

10. Sweden's Enduring Relations with North Korea: Establishing Trust for Peace by *Kent HÄRSTEDT*
11. The European Union's Humanitarian Assistance Program in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by *Saroj DASH*

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

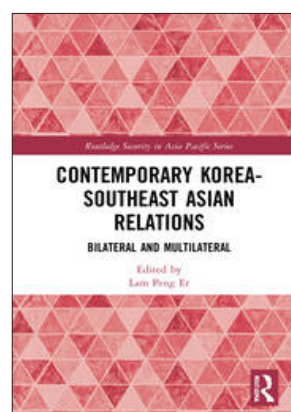
Description:

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-Korea's-New-Southern-Policy-A-Middle-Power's-International-Relations/Er/p/book/9781032404479>

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_gIVxYBLBR019w6SEAAAYASAAEgIMS_D_BwE

CHRONOLOGY

ASEAN - Korea Relations

A Chronology of Key Events:

October 2024 to December 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.

October 2024

1st - 2nd	The Second ASEAN-Korea Forum on the Future of Education convened in Gumi city, Republic of Korea (ROK), under the theme “Embracing Digital Transformation: Bridging the Skills Gap in Education”. Co-organised by the Thai Ministry of Education, Kyungwoon University and the ASEAN Secretariat, the forum brought together participants from ASEAN member states and the ROK to address the role of digital transformation in education. Discussions centred on bridging skills gaps, sharing best practices and fostering regional partnerships. Secretary-General of ASEAN Dr Kao Kim Hourn stressed the need for equitable access to digital technologies, enhanced teacher support and policies to harness technology for inclusive education. The agenda included sessions on closing digital competency gaps, innovative digital education practices and ASEAN-ROK collaborations like the ASEAN Cyber University Project and technical and vocational education and training mobility programme. Building on the success of the 2023 forum, participants explored strategies to strengthen educational systems and equip learners with digital-age skills. The event concluded with a commitment to future ASEAN-ROK cooperation in education reform.
2nd	Dr Kao Kim Hourn attended a working lunch hosted by ROK Ambassador to ASEAN, HE Lee Jang-keun, where they discussed ASEAN-ROK relations and key deliverables for the 25th ASEAN-ROK Summit commemorating the 35th anniversary of dialogue relations, scheduled for October 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.
2nd	The ASEAN-Korea Centre hosted the “Crafting Tourism Narratives in Digital Content” seminar in Bandung, Indonesia in collaboration with Indonesia’s Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Tourism content creators and experts from Korea and Indonesia shared best practices in digital tourism marketing and visual media promotion. The programme included expert presentations, discussions on successful case studies and site visits to filming locations. Notable speakers included industry professionals from both nations, who explored strategies for producing digital content for global tourism promotion. Bandung, a cultural and creative hub known for its history and accessibility, provided an ideal setting for the seminar. The Centre also reiterated its ongoing efforts to enhance ASEAN tourism competitiveness through future bilateral initiatives.
3rd	Dr Kao Kim Hourn met ASEAN-Korea Centre Secretary-General HE Kim Jae-shin at the ASEAN Secretariat, where they discussed the ASEAN-Korea Centre’s role in fostering ASEAN-ROK cooperation. Dr Kao encouraged the ASEAN-Korea Centre to expand activities and programmes to boost trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the ROK.
3rd - 4th	The 45th ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD) and related consultations with its six dialogue partners, Australia, India, Japan, the ROK, Russia and the Plus Three, - were held virtually. The events included ASOD leaders of all ASEAN member states, dialogue partners and the ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General for Political-Security Community, with Timor-Leste as an observer. Preceding the main meetings, five ASOD working groups on Preventive Education, Treatment and Rehabilitation, Law Enforcement, Research and Alternative Development convened on 2 October to discuss the regional drug situation, emerging trends, best practices and opportunities for enhanced cooperation against illicit drugs.

6th - 11th	ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol embarked on a six-day Southeast Asia trip beginning on 6 October 2024 with a state visit to the Philippines in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties. During his visit, he met President Ferdinand Marcos Jr to discuss enhancing bilateral relations, focusing on defence, trade and economic cooperation. On 8 October 2024, Yoon travelled to Singapore for a two-day state visit, where he held talks with Prime Minister Lawrence Wong to deepen ties in areas such as artificial intelligence, digital innovation, defence and supply chains. The day after, he delivered a keynote speech outlining South Korea's vision for unification and its broader role in the Indo-Pacific region, before departing for Laos. Subsequently, on 10 October 2024, Yoon subsequently participated in the 44th and 45th ASEAN Summits that took place in Vientiane, Laos, from 9 to 11 October 2024, where South Korea and ASEAN formally elevated their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. He also took part in the ASEAN Plus Three Summit with Japan and China. Yoon subsequently attended the East Asia Summit on 11 October 2024, before returning to South Korea.
7th	On his state visit to the Philippines, ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol and his counterpart formally elevated relationship to a Strategic Partnership, marking 75 years of diplomatic ties. A series of key Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) was signed. Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power and the Philippine Department of Energy signed an MOU to conduct a feasibility study on reviving the Bataan nuclear power plant, which has been dormant since 1986. This study aims to assess the project's safety and economic potential, highlighting nuclear energy as a cornerstone of future collaboration. Another MOU signed between the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of South Korea and the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry seeks to establish a resilient supply chain for critical raw materials like nickel, leveraging the Philippines' status as the world's second-largest nickel producer. In the realm of maritime security, representatives from both nations' maritime authorities signed an MOU to enhance cooperation in combating transnational crimes, improving search-and-rescue operations and bolstering maritime security. These measures align with broader efforts to uphold regional stability and safety. At the Korea-Philippines Business Forum attended by approximately 300 business leaders from both nations, a total of 13 MOUs were signed. In the energy sector, three MOUs were finalised, focusing on nuclear energy technology and gas-fired combined cycle power plant projects, in collaboration between Korean firms and the Philippines' largest independent power producers. In the construction and smart city domains, four MOUs were signed, addressing areas such as infrastructure development, manpower exchange and integration of smart city technologies. Five additional MOUs were signed across industries such as aircraft maintenance, defence, agriculture and retail, establishing frameworks for enhanced cooperation in these critical sectors. Lastly, the Federation of Korean Industries and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed an MOU to bolster bilateral trade and investment by improving economic collaboration and market information exchange.
7th - 9th	The 77th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Southeast Asia took place in New Delhi, India bringing together health ministers and delegations from 11 member countries, namely Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Bhutan, North Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The session, chaired by India's Health Minister JP Nadda, provided a platform for addressing regional public health priorities and formulating collaborative strategies for progress. Discussions focused on accelerating advancements in health care, highlighting key topics such as regional disease prevention efforts, healthcare financing and improving health system resilience. A significant milestone celebrated during the event was Timor-Leste's certification by the WHO for eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis. The event concluded with commitments to enhancing collaboration, establishing new public health guidelines and implementing collective actions to improve healthcare outcomes in Southeast Asia. ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol made a state visit to Singapore ahead of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2025. On 8 October, President Yoon met Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Discussions focused on advancing cooperation in areas such as AI, cybersecurity, climate change, trade and education. Wong and Yoon discussed enhancing trade, investment, air connectivity and defence cooperation while agreeing to prioritise forward-looking areas like the digital and green economies. Both countries will work to upgrade ties to a Strategic Partnership in 2025 to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties. On the same day, ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) signed three intergovernmental MOUs with Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry. These included the landmark Supply Chain Partnership Arrangement, Korea's first bilateral supply chain agreement, focusing on monitoring disruptions, emergency coordination and customs support. Additional MOUs were inked for liquefied natural gas cooperation to stabilise supplies and cut costs and for joint research and development efforts in cutting-edge areas like artificial intelligence, future mobility and renewable energy.

7th - 9th	Subsequently, the Korea-Singapore Business Forum took place, co-hosted by the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Singapore Business Federation. The forum was attended by over 300 business, industry and government leaders, including MOTIE Minister Dukgeun Ahn and Singapore's Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Trade and Industry Tan See Leng. President Yoon delivered the keynote address. Key agreements included five MOUs in energy and infrastructure, targeting hydrogen technology, clean energy systems and sustainable urban projects. Two MOUs were signed in high-tech industries, with one focusing on introducing autonomous vehicles to Southeast Asia. The retail sector saw two MOUs promoting Korean food and retail businesses in Singapore, while the remaining MOU focuses on the expansion of K-Pop and promotion of global talent. On 9 October, President Yoon delivered the 47th Singapore Lecture titled, "A Vision for Korean Unification Toward a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region", chaired by Singapore's Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean.
8th	Ambassador Keo Mackhaphon and members of the Lao embassy in Pyongyang visited the statues of President Kim Il Sung and Chairman Kim Jong Il on Mansu Hill to mark the 79th founding anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea. They laid a floral basket and paid their respects.
9th	Cambodia's Minister of Environment Dr Eang Sophalleth met Kim Sangyoung, president of South Korea's Dahan Corporation, to discuss potential investment in establishing a recycling plant in Cambodia. The meeting highlighted Dahan Corporation's interest and alignment with Cambodia's environmental sustainability goals, such as "Today, I Don't Use Plastic Bags" and "Cambodia Beauty, Khmer Can Do", which aim to reduce plastic pollution.
10th	The 27th ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit convened in Vientiane, chaired by Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone. Participants included ASEAN member states, China, Japan, and South Korea, with Timor-Leste's prime minister attending as an observer. The summit also featured the ASEAN secretary-general, AMRO director, 2024 chairman of the East Asia Business Council and secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat. The APT member states issued a statement emphasising the importance of resilient, inclusive and connected regional supply chains as critical drivers of economic growth and stability amidst geopolitical and economic uncertainties. The statement reaffirmed prior commitments, including the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, multilateral trade principles under the WTO and ASEAN's focus on supply chain connectivity through its Leaders' Declaration at the 44th ASEAN Summit. It also aligned with Lao PDR's 2024 ASEAN chairmanship theme of enhancing connectivity and resilience to foster regional integration and prosperity. The 25th ASEAN-ROK Summit, commemorating 35 years of dialogue relations, was subsequently held in Vientiane, chaired by Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone. Attendees included ASEAN member states, ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol, Timor-Leste's prime minister as an observer and the ASEAN secretary-general. ASEAN and South Korea established a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to deepen cooperation in various areas, marking the 35th anniversary of dialogue relations. The partnership focuses on advancing peace, security, economic growth and socio-cultural collaboration. Key priorities include enhancing supply chain resilience, supporting sustainable and digital transformation, bolstering food security and expanding people-to-people exchanges through education, youth programmes and cultural initiatives. The ROK committed to up its annual funding for ASEAN-related initiatives to US\$48 million by 2027. Both sides also pledged to support Timor-Leste's integration into ASEAN and optimise existing platforms like the ASEAN-Korea Centre and ASEAN Cultural House to strengthen collaboration.
10th	Laos and the ROK signed three agreements in Vientiane during ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol's visit. Among these was a framework agreement to extend concessional loans at the previous funding level of US\$500 million under the Economic Development Cooperation Fund for 2024–2027. The funds are earmarked for infrastructure projects in high-value sectors such as transport and water resources. Additionally, South Korea and Laos signed agreements on climate change cooperation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in line with the Paris Agreement. These agreements, signed in the presence of Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith and President Yoon, underscored nearly three decades of partnership and laid the groundwork for enhanced collaboration in 2024, marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Separately, President Yoon met Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to discuss strengthening security and economic relations. Yoon expressed gratitude for Vietnam's support on Korean Peninsula issues and highlighted ambitions to boost bilateral trade to US\$150 billion by 2030. He also sought Vietnam's support for South Korean businesses involved in infrastructure projects. Prime Minister Chinh thanked South Korea for its US\$2 million in typhoon recovery aid and reaffirmed Vietnam's commitment to supporting South Korean companies and their comprehensive strategic partnership. Vietnam remains South Korea's third-largest trading partner, an indication of the importance of economic and strategic ties between the two nations.

11th	The 19th East Asia Summit (EAS) took place in Vientiane, Lao PDR chaired by Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone. It was attended by EAS member states, key regional partners and the prime minister of Timor-Leste as an observer. Guests of the chair, including the president of the European Council and secretary-general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, highlighted connectivity and economic integration. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the EAS as a premier forum for dialogue and cooperation on strategic, political and economic issues, promoting peace, stability and prosperity in East Asia.
11th	The Vietnamese Ministry of Home Affairs hosted an online workshop for ASEAN Plus Three countries, with discussions focused on experiences in digital transformation within the civil service sector. As part of the ASEAN Plus Three Civil Service Cooperation Plan (2021-2025), the event aimed to support comprehensive reform efforts aligned with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and to enhance the role of civil services in building responsive and constructive governance. The workshop provided a platform for representatives to discuss achievements, challenges and strategies in digitalising government functions. Vietnam highlighted its digital transformation strategy centred on three pillars: digital government, economy and society. Key initiatives showcased included the National Public Service Portal, which offers over 4,500 online services, and the VNeID electronic identification app, which integrates services for over 78 million users. Participants from the Philippines presented their vision for enhancing public servant capacities and citizen service delivery under their AmBisyon Natin 2040 strategy, while Indonesia shared its roadmap for public administration digitalisation, including paperless services and digital signatures. The event underscored the shared commitment of ASEAN Plus Three countries to modernising civil services to better serve citizens and drive regional progress.
14th	The ROK pledged US\$1 million to the United Nations Development Programme to aid Vietnam's recovery from Typhoon Yagi, which impacted 3.6 million people, damaged 400,000 homes and caused \$3.3 billion in damages. The UNDP's recovery programme, focused on Hai Phong, Lao Cai, Yen Bai and Quang Ninh, aims to address immediate needs through recovery kits and cash transfers while fostering long-term resilience by rebuilding storm-resilient homes and infrastructure and offering cash-for-work opportunities. The initiative prioritises vulnerable groups and includes consultations with affected communities.
15th	Communist Party of Vietnam General Secretary and State President To Lam met Chang Ho-jin, special adviser on foreign affairs and security to ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol, in Hanoi. Lam praised Chang's visit following his recent talks with President Yoon and expressed gratitude for South Korea's timely support after Typhoon Yagi. Chang highlighted the strong development of ROK-Vietnam ties over three decades and reaffirmed South Korea's commitment to being a key partner in Vietnam's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2045. Both leaders emphasised the importance of expanding cooperation in high technology, innovation, infrastructure, energy and defence while aligning on maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and respecting international law in the East Sea. To Lam affirmed ROK's priority status in Vietnam's foreign policy and outlined directions for strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership.
17th - 20th	ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, in collaboration with the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, hosted "Seoul Food in Bangkok 2024", its largest food exhibition aimed at fostering global trade and exchange in the food industry. Held at Iconsiam in Bangkok, the event featured a business-to-business (B2B) exhibition with 92 South Korean exporters, with a business-to-consumer (B2C) pop-up exhibition with 31 exporters lasting until 3 November 2024. Major Southeast and South Asian distributors, including Thailand's CP Group and Vietnam's Lotte, attended business-matching events, while an MOU was signed with the Thai Chamber of Commerce to bolster cooperation. The event was expected to generate over \$300 million in B2B deals and attract 200,000 visitors. Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency plans to hold another Bangkok exhibition in 2025 with increased participation from South Korean exporters.
19th - 22nd	Hanoi People's Committee Chairman Tran Sy Thanh visited South Korea and met senior officials and representatives of major enterprises. During talks with National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik, Thanh highlighted ROK's roles as Vietnam's top foreign investor, second-largest official development assistance provider and third-largest trading partner, with strong tourism ties. Thanh reaffirmed Hanoi's commitment to fostering partnerships with South Korea in key sectors and supporting Korean businesses and nationals in the city. In Gyeonggi province, Thanh proposed enhanced collaboration between Hanoi's Hoa Lac Hi-tech Park and Gyeonggi's Urban Development Corporation, resulting in an MOU on cooperation in areas such as smart cities, urban planning, cultural preservation and climate change. During meetings with Seoul Mayor Oh Se Hoon and City Council Chairwoman Choi Ho Jung, both sides agreed to deepen ties in urban development, digital transformation and smart city initiatives, as well as in organising events for the 30th anniversary of Hanoi-Seoul relations in 2026. Thanh also attended the Hanoi-ROK 2024 Investment and Trade Promotion Conference and engaged with leading Korean companies.

21st - 23rd	The ASEAN-Korea Centre hosted the “ASEAN-Korea Startup Innovation Week 2024” at the ST Centre, featuring a pitching contest and capacity-building activities for 30 ASEAN startups nominated by embassies and the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME). The programme, upgraded to mark the Centre’s 15th anniversary, included lectures by prominent CEOs, site visits to startup support centres and opportunities to pitch ideas to Korean investors. The winning startup received US\$30,000 and an invitation to NextRise 2025, Korea’s largest startup exhibition. Prior to the event, a two-week Acceleration Programme provided mentoring, lectures and business meetings to enhance startup capabilities.
21st - 26th	Vietnam Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Minh Vu led a delegation to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and co-chaired the Fifth Vietnam-DPRK policy exchange with DPRK Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Sang Gil. During the dialogue on 23 October, both sides expressed satisfaction with recent progress in political, diplomatic, defence, cultural and sports cooperation, while agreeing to enhance delegation exchanges and prepare for the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2025. Discussions also covered regional and international issues, including peace on the Korean Peninsula and cooperation at forums like the UN and ASEAN Regional Forum. The sixth policy exchange was planned to take place in Vietnam. The visit included several cultural and diplomatic engagements. On 24 October, the delegation attended a photo exhibition and reception at the Vietnamese Embassy to commemorate the 60th anniversary of DPRK President Kim Il Sung’s visit to Vietnam, with senior DPRK officials and Vietnamese Ambassador Le Ba Vinh in attendance. On 25 October, the delegation visited sites such as the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum, Pyongyang Kim Jong Suk Textile Mill and DPRK-Vietnam Friendship Kyongsang Kindergarten. They also met DPRK Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui and representatives from the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Ministry of External Economic Relations. The delegation departed on 26 October, concluding a visit that reinforced bilateral ties and traditional friendship.
22nd	ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy announced the commencement of the fifth round of free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations with Malaysia to strengthen bilateral economic ties. The four-day talks in Seoul followed the resumption of discussions in August 2024 after a five-year pause. While South Korea already has an FTA with ASEAN, it sought deeper ties with individual member states through separate FTAs. The negotiations covered 13 sectors, including goods, services, investment, economic cooperation and the digital industry, with both sides aiming to accelerate progress.
23rd	Cambodia and South Korea formalised an agreement to strengthen educational cooperation through a Letter of Agreement signed by Dr Hang Chuon Naron, Cambodia’s deputy prime minister and education minister, and Park Jung-Wook, South Korean ambassador to Cambodia. The agreement includes introducing Korean as a formal subject in 15 Cambodian schools, enhancing project implementation efficiency through institutional collaboration and outlining commitments for facilitating the programme. Dr Hang commended South Korea’s support, highlighting its role in Cambodia’s human resource development under the Royal Government’s Pentagonal Strategy towards the Kingdom’s 2030 and 2050 visions.
24th	The “2024 Korea-ASEAN Intellectual Property Cooperation Conference” was held at Hotel Naru Seoul Mgallery, bringing together representatives from ASEAN embassies, Korean government agencies and intellectual property (IP) experts to discuss the current IP landscape and enhance collaboration between Korea and ASEAN. Hosted by Korea’s Presidential Council on Intellectual Property and organised by the Federation of Intellectual Property Societies of Korea, the event aimed to foster private sector cooperation and raise public awareness of intellectual property rights.
24th	The inaugural Cambodia-Korea Public-Private Sector Dialogue was held at the Council for the Development of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Sun Chanthol and ROK Ambassador Park Jung Wook. Attended by representatives from 20 government ministries, Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, Korea International Cooperation Agency, Korean Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia and private sector stakeholders, the Dialogue aimed to strengthen economic ties, enhance the investment climate and build trust with Korean investors. Initiated by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol during their meeting in May 2024, the event highlighted Cambodia’s investment trends and the CDC’s online investment application system. Both sides emphasised the importance of fostering cooperation to attract more Korean investment in Cambodia.

24th	The 11th ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA) Meeting, themed “Bridging Cultures, Building Futures: Unity in Diversity,” was held in Melaka, Malaysia, alongside related meetings with dialogue partners, including China, Japan and the ROK. Preceded by the 20th Senior Officials Responsible for Culture and Arts meetings, the event focused on advancing ASEAN’s culture and arts agenda under Malaysia’s leadership, with priorities on youth, creative economy and digitalisation. Key achievements included the transfer of ASEAN City of Culture to Melaka for the 2024–2026 period and plans for an ASEAN Creative Economy Sustainability Framework. Progress in partnerships with China, Japan and the ROK in areas such as cultural exchanges and heritage management was highlighted, alongside new collaborations with the United Kingdom and Italy. Delegates also reviewed the ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts (2016–2025) and initiated discussions on a post-2025 work plan. The meeting concluded with appreciation for Malaysia’s hosting and plans for the 12th AMCA in Myanmar in 2026. The Sixth AMCA + ROK Meeting reviewed significant progress in cultural and arts cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK. Participants noted various joint initiatives and ongoing policy dialogues with the Korea Heritage Service, highlighting the breadth of collaboration. Additionally, ASEAN Secretary-General Dr Kao Kim Hourn, along with AMCA ministers and representatives from China, Japan and South Korea, paid a courtesy call to Malaysia’s Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts Dato Sri Tiong King Sing.
24 - 25th	ASEAN and its partners reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening disaster resilience at the 12th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) and the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) held in Brunei Darussalam. Chaired by Brunei’s Minister of Home Affairs Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ahmaddin, the meetings reviewed the AADMER Work Programme 2021–2025 and launched the ASEAN Ministerial Declaration on Inclusive and Sustainable Disaster Recovery. Events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Indian Ocean Tsunami and ASEAN Day on Disaster Management were also held. Achievements in 2024 included advancements in disaster response, capacity building and the ASEAN Risk Communication Framework. Preceding meetings included the 45th ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management Meeting, the 20th AHA Centre Governing Board Meeting and sessions with dialogue partners such as China, Japan and South Korea, who pledged continued support for disaster risk reduction. Cambodia will host the next AMMDM in 2025.
25th	The 24th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry Plus Three (AMAF+3) Meeting, held virtually and chaired by Myanmar, reviewed progress under the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Strategy 2016-2025. Discussions focused on sustainable agriculture, digital technologies and climate adaptation to address regional challenges, such as food security and ecological resilience. Key initiatives included crop insurance, irrigation management, reducing agrochemical use and controlling transboundary diseases like African Swine Fever. The meeting highlighted the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve, which distributed nearly 3,000 MT of rice in 2023 to Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and the Philippines, with further contributions pledged for 2024. Progress in the ASEAN Food Security Information System was acknowledged and priorities for post-2025 cooperation were outlined, including sustainable agriculture and decarbonisation. The meeting appreciated continued support from China, Japan and South Korea and tasked the ASEAN Secretariat with drafting an Action Plan for 2026-2030.
25th	South Korea’s Deputy Minister for Energy Policy Lee Ho-hyeon met Datuk Adif Zulkifli, CEO of Petronas’ Gas and Maritime Business, in Seoul to discuss energy cooperation in liquefied natural gas (LNG), hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS). Both sides emphasised the importance of securing stable energy resources amid global supply chain uncertainties and pledged to strengthen collaboration. They reviewed existing LNG supply contracts involving Petronas and Korean companies like Korea Gas Corporation and highlighted ongoing joint projects, including a green hydrogen and ammonia initiative in Sarawak with Korea National Oil Corporation and Samsung E&A. Discussions also covered the Shepherd CCS Project, which aims to transport carbon dioxide from Korea to Malaysia for storage. Lee requested Petronas’ continued support for these ventures and noted ongoing government-level talks about a potential MOU to bolster CCS cooperation.
26th	A 21-member delegation of doctors, medical staff and interpreters from ROK-Vietnam Exchange and Development Committee conducted a voluntary medical programme in Thanh Hoa city, providing free medical consultations to over 100 low-income residents aged 50-70. Committee Chairman Lee Jong Il stated plans to expand the initiative to other areas in Vietnam to improve healthcare services and strengthen bilateral healthcare cooperation. The Committee, established on 30 July 2024, has a membership of 270 participating Korean enterprises. It aims to enhance bilateral collaboration in culture, education, socio-economy and science-technology.

27th	The Vietnam Coast Guard's (VCG) CSB 8004 ship departed for the ROK to strengthen ties with the Korean Coast Guard (KCG) as part of their 2007 MOU on cooperation. The visit aimed to enhance friendship, understanding and trust between the forces through meetings with local authorities, experience-sharing sessions with the KCG academy, and joint exercises in search and rescue, and fire prevention. The delegation also planned cultural site visits. At the send-off in Hai Phong, Major General Tran Van Tho highlighted the trip's alignment with the Central Military Commission and Ministry of National Defence's international integration directives, noting its role in boosting cooperation and improving the VCG crew's operational skills and sea-readiness.
28th - 31st	The Johor government held meetings with several major South Korean companies during Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi's four-day working visit to Seoul. The delegation engaged with Hanwha Solutions Corporation, SPC Group and CJ CheilJedang Group to explore potential investments worth US\$190 million. These investments were expected to create high-income jobs and stimulate economic growth in Johor, benefitting its residents.
29th	South Korea's Fair Trade Commission (FTC) hosted its second enforcers' summit in Seoul, bringing together competition authorities from ASEAN and the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Mongolia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The meeting focused on sharing experiences in formulating and enforcing competition policies to foster market innovation and protect consumer rights.
29th	South Korea's MOTIE hosted the "K-FEZ DAY in Singapore" event at Marina Bay Sands to promote Korea's Free Economic Zones (K-FEZs). Among the 90-odd participants were representatives from Singaporean companies, venture capital firms and financial institutions. Authorities from the Gyeonggi, Gwangyang Bay Area, Busan-Jinhae, Ulsan and Incheon FEZs led the promotion, marking their first direct engagement with Singaporean investors. The event highlighted the strong investment connections between Singapore and Korea, with a cumulative investment of US\$33 billion in areas like Kakao Entertainment and Celltrion. Each K-FEZ authority presented its zone's strengths and conducted consultations with representatives from major investment entities, including Enterprise Singapore, Temasek and GIC.
30th	The Cambodian Ministry of Tourism convened a meeting in Phnom Penh with representatives from the South Korean Embassy and the Korean private sector in Cambodia to address concerns stemming from a Korean TV report alleging illegal detention and coercion of Korean citizens in Cambodia. Chaired by the Minister of Tourism Huot Hak, he highlighted Cambodia's peace, security and favourable conditions for foreign investment and tourism, particularly for South Koreans. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to combating crime, including online offences. The Korean Association and other stakeholders reassured the Korean community of Cambodia's safety and encouraged tourism and investment from South Korea.
30th	The Indonesian Embassy in Seoul hosted the "Friends of Indonesia" Symposium, highlighting the role of South Korean citizens with ties to Indonesia in strengthening bilateral relations. Attended by 40 participants from various fields, the symposium launched the "Friends of Indonesia Society" to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. The event featured cultural performances, an exhibition on the Korea-Cia Culture Exchange, and Indonesian-related publications and artwork.
30th	The 2024 Segye ASEAN Forum, held at the Seoul Press Centre, celebrated 75 years of Philippines-Korea diplomatic relations and highlighted trade and investment opportunities under the newly implemented FTA. The event, which focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation, featured presentations by top Philippine officials on strategic areas such as manufacturing, clean energy, digital transformation and climate change resilience. Key sessions focused on mutual economic benefits, supply chain strengthening and innovative technologies. Korean experts from organisations like KITA and KIEP shared insights, reinforcing the forum's role as a platform for collaboration and economic partnership. The forum also underscored both nations' shared commitment to the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and their complementary roles in regional economic development.

31st	The 28th ASEAN Labour Ministers' Meeting (ALMM) and the 13th ASEAN Plus Three Labour Ministers' Meeting (ALMM+3) was held in Singapore, featuring participation from ASEAN member states, China, Japan, South Korea and Timor-Leste as an observer. Marking 50 years of ASEAN labour cooperation since the first ALMM in 1975, the event celebrated milestones with a commemorative video and time capsule. Discussions reviewed the progress of the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Work Programme 2021-2025, addressing issues such as occupational safety, labour inspections, migrant worker protections, green jobs promotion, gender mainstreaming and development of a future-ready workforce. The meeting endorsed the Vientiane Declaration on Skills Mobility, Recognition and Development of Migrant Workers, along with guidelines for social security portability and child labour prevention, supporting their implementation across the region. It explored Malaysia's labour-related priorities as the 2025 ASEAN chair, including initiatives under the "ASEAN Year of Skills", and agreed to develop the 2026-2030 work programme, focusing on sustainable entrepreneurship, digital and green skills development, inclusive social security and occupational safety for underserved sectors like migrant fishers. The ALMM+3 reaffirmed collaboration with Plus Three countries (China, Japan and South Korea) to improve labour migration governance and prepare the region's workforce for challenges like digitalisation and demographic shifts. Ongoing and future initiatives supported by the Plus Three countries included technical and vocational education and training mobility programmes, human resource development forums and capacity-building projects. The meeting expressed appreciation for these contributions and emphasised their importance for sustaining regional resilience. The next ALMM+3 will take place in Thailand in 2026 under its chairmanship.
31st	Cambodia requested South Korea to increase job quotas and opportunities for skilled Cambodian workers, enabling them to contribute to national development upon their return. The request was made by the Minister of Labour and Vocational Training Heng Sour during a bilateral meeting with Kim Min Seok, South Korea's vice-minister of employment and labour at the 28th ASEAN Labour Ministers' Meeting in Singapore. Heng Sour praised South Korea's support for Cambodian workers and vocational training, particularly through the Employment Permit System and Korea Labour and Employment Service. Kim Min Seok reaffirmed South Korea's commitment to enhancing cooperation in labour and vocational training, including improving mechanisms for accepting Cambodian workers.

November 2024

1st	The Sixth ASEAN-Korea Day Reception, hosted in Jakarta by South Korea's Mission to ASEAN, marked the 35th Anniversary of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations. The event celebrated milestones in ASEAN-ROK ties, including the establishment of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership at the ASEAN-ROK Summit in October 2024. In Secretary-General of ASEAN Dr Kao Kim Hourn's congratulatory remarks, he highlighted the significant achievements over the past 35 years and expressed appreciation for South Korea's support for ASEAN's community-building efforts.
1st - 2nd	The Embassy of the ROK hosted the Korea-Laos Cultural Festival 2024 at Vientiane Centre to celebrate Lao PDR's successful ASEAN chairmanship. The festival featured cultural activities such as wearing Hanbok, sampling Korean dishes and playing traditional games. ROK Ambassador to Laos Jung Yung Soo highlighted the significance of the recent summit between Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith, celebrating 29 years of diplomatic ties. The event featured booths by Korean agencies and companies showcasing local projects and products, performances like Taekwondo and K-pop, and a soccer game honouring the Korean coach of the Lao national team. The event had a participation of about 1,000, with a follow-up event, the "Korean Ambassador Cup Baseball Tournament", announced for December.
4th	As part of the 35th Anniversary of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Indonesia in West Java hosted an electric vehicle (EV) delivery ceremony and a roundtable discussion on developing an EV ecosystem in ASEAN. A Hyundai EV was officially handed over by South Korea's Mission to ASEAN to the ASEAN Secretariat as part of the project funded by the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund. ROK Ambassador Lee Jang-keun, ASEAN representatives, EV experts and other invited guests were at a roundtable to examine EV industry trends in ASEAN member states and South Korea.
5th	Cambodia's Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and Gochang county, Jeollabuk-do province, South Korea discussed enhancing cooperation in labour during a meeting between Cambodian Minister of Labour Heng Sour and Shim Deok-seop, Gochang governor. The focus was on Cambodia's participation in Gochang's seasonal labour programme. Heng Sour expressed gratitude for Gochang's recruitment of Cambodian workers since 2023 and requested for an increase in quota, particularly for skilled workers, while also appreciating South Korea's protection of Cambodian workers. Shim praised Cambodian workers for their positive attitude and work ethic, highlighting ongoing efforts to support their work with a dedicated dormitory model.

5th - 8th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre hosted the ASEAN Week 2024 in Seoul and Jeju, marking the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-Korea relations and its elevation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and the ASEAN-Korea Centre's 15th anniversary. Key events included the "International Conference on ASEAN-Korea Partnership 2024", exploring 35 years of collaboration and future strategies, and the "Unveiling Ceremony of Jeju Olle Trail 8 Route: ASEAN-Korea Olle", highlighting cultural and tourism connections. The "Launching Seminar of the Korean ESG Guidebook" showcased environment, social and governance practices, w the ASEAN-Korea Youth Summit engaged 53 youth delegates to propose ways to enhance relations. Since 2019, ASEAN Week has served as a flagship initiative to strengthen the ASEAN-Korea partnership and raise public awareness.
6th	South Korea's Trade Commission and Vietnam's Trade Remedies Authority held the Eighth Conference on Trade Remedies in Seoul, discussing strategies to reduce trade disputes, address emerging issues and strengthen cooperation in anti-dumping investigations. The meeting, building on the Vietnam-South Korea FTA signed in 2015 and a trade remedies cooperation MOU established in 2018, focused on fostering bilateral trade and enhancing trade defence collaboration. A key topic was Vietnam's ongoing anti-dumping investigation into Korean galvanised steel sheets, initiated in June. South Korea requested Vietnam to carefully assess the investigation's impact, noting the minimal effect on Vietnam's steel industry and emphasising the importance of balanced regulatory measures.
6th	Laos Deputy Prime Minister Saleumxay Kommasit met South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul to discuss recent bilateral cooperation, including outcomes from the meeting between Lao President Thonglun Sisoulith and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol during the 25th ASEAN-South Korea Summit in Vientiane. Both sides noted their mutual appreciation for the strong relations and ongoing collaborations over the past three decades, exemplified by frequent high-level exchanges and partnerships in economic, tourism, investment and industry sectors. Kommasit expressed gratitude for South Korea's support in areas such as public health, unexploded ordnance clearance, rural development, human resource initiatives, and especially its backing of Laos' ASEAN chairmanship in 2024. The two officials also discussed plans for a meaningful celebration of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations. ROK Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul welcomed Deputy Prime Minister Kommasit to Seoul and praised Laos' successful ASEAN chairmanship, highlighting the establishment of the ASEAN-ROK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership as a milestone for regional cooperation.
7th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre and Korean Association for Southeast Asian Studies hosted the "International Conference on ASEAN-Korea Partnership 2024" in Seoul, commemorating the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-Korea relations and its elevation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). Supported by ROK's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ASEAN Secretariat, the event comprised four sessions on political-security, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of the partnership, alongside discussions on the ASEAN-Korea Centre's long-term strategy. Participants explored topics such as digital transformation, environmental, social and governance practices, youth exchanges and the CSP's future trajectory.
7th	An international workshop held by the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) in Hanoi focused on the Vietnam-ROK comprehensive strategic partnership and strategies for future generations. Topics discussed included education, governance, youth employment and startups. VASS President Dr Phan Chi Hieu highlighted bilateral achievements in politics, economy, culture, education and technology and urged cooperation to address challenges like climate change and supply chain disruptions. Participants discussed enhancing digital skills, expanding university collaborations and strengthening policy research. VASS signed a cooperation agreement with ROK's National Research Council for Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences to promote research and academic exchanges.
7th	Nguyen Xuan Thang, Politburo member, president of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and chairman of the Central Theory Council, met Kim Chae-Hwan, president of South Korea's National Human Resources Development Institute, in Hanoi. Thang highlighted Vietnam's focus on high-quality human resource development and praised the institutions' longstanding cooperation, including support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency for a strategic leadership training programme from 2013 to 2016. Since 2023, a new phase of the project has begun, with two training courses completed. Kim proposed signing MOUs to strengthen collaboration in leadership training, staff exchanges and policy consultancy. The meeting coincided with a scientific seminar on developing public sector human resources for socio-economic progress, co-hosted by the two institutions.
7 - 8th	The 2024 ASEAN+3 Human Resource Development (HRD) Forum, themed "Empowering the Workforce for a Sustainable Future", was held in Seoul. Organised by South Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labour, HRD Korea and the World Bank, the Forum served as a vital platform for knowledge sharing and cooperation among ASEAN+3 countries. It underscored the importance of human resource development as a driver of sustainable regional growth, with ASEAN Secretary-General Dr Kao Kim Hourn delivering pre-recorded keynote remarks emphasising the Forum's significance.
8th	South Korea pledged US\$500,000 in humanitarian aid to the Philippines through the World Food Programme to support relief efforts following typhoons that had left 148 dead and 21 missing, affecting 8.6 million people as of 4 November.

11th	The Philippines and the ROK commemorated 75 years of diplomatic relations with the hosting of the Third Maritime Dialogue in Incheon. Co-chaired by Assistant Secretary Marshall Louis Alferez of the Philippines and Director General Kim Dong-Bae of ROK, the dialogue brought together government officials to review maritime cooperation, including security, domain awareness, countering illegal fishing, environmental protection and regional maritime concerns. Discussions also covered transferring decommissioned vessels to the Philippines and potential port infrastructure collaboration. Both nations reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based international order under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and stressed the importance of peace and stability in the South China Sea. The event concluded with a tour of the Korean Coast Guard facilities and plans were made to hold the next dialogue in the Philippines in 2025.
11th	South Korea commenced its annual economic consultation with the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office to review the country's economic policies and circumstances, according to the finance ministry. The discussions, involving 19 institutions, including the finance ministry and the central bank, are set to continue until 29 November.
13th	South Korea's MOTIE and Indonesia's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources convened the 15th Korea-Indonesia Energy Forum in Seoul, bringing together 60 participants from governments, public companies and energy firms. MOTIE proposed renewing the 2022 critical minerals supply chain MOU, which expired in February 2024, and sought stable liquefied natural gas supplies at reasonable prices for Korean companies operating in Indonesia. Discussions also covered follow-ups to the small modular reactor cooperation MOU signed by Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power and Indonesia's Perusahaan Listrik Negara Nusantara Power. The Korea Gas Safety Corporation requested bilateral data sharing for safety management and the use of Indonesian facilities for training. An investment session was held alongside the Forum to encourage collaboration between Korean companies and the Indonesian government.
14th	ROK Trade Minister Inkyo Cheong and Singapore's Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations Grace Fu held a meeting on the sidelines of the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Peru to discuss bilateral trade issues, further highlighting Korea's active engagement in strengthening economic ties within the region.
14 - 16th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre participated in Korea's largest gaming event, G-STAR 2024, showcasing 30 game companies from eight ASEAN member states. The event included B2B exhibitions, business meetings and a capacity-building workshop to promote ASEAN's gaming industry globally. The ASEAN Pavilion highlighted innovations such as 2D and 3D game arts, gamification services and publishing. A workshop at BEXCO featured talks on market trends, localisation strategies and global cooperation from Samjong KPMG, Digital Hearts Seoul and leading ASEAN game developers. Kim underscored the sector's rapid growth, noting that the ASEAN gaming market, currently valued at \$5 billion, is projected to grow annually by 8.6% through 2025. The Centre has participated in G-STAR annually since 2014.
15th	South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol met Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Lima, Peru. President Yoon emphasised the strong economic ties between the two nations, particularly in crude oil trade and construction projects. He expressed a desire to expand cooperation to new areas such as defence industries, smart cities and digital technologies. Sultan Bolkiah acknowledged the significant contributions of South Korean companies to Brunei's major infrastructure developments and committed to further collaboration in areas like climate change and enhancing cybersecurity capabilities.
16th	Vietnamese President Luong Cuong met South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol during the 2024 APEC Economic Leaders' Week in Lima, Peru. The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the strong Vietnam-South Korea ties, enhanced by their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. They agreed to maintain high-level exchanges, deepen economic cooperation to reach US\$150 billion in trade by 2030, and prioritise human resource development, R&D and global supply chain integration. ROK pledged to increase official development assistance for Vietnam in areas like infrastructure, climate response and energy transition. Both sides stressed peaceful resolutions for the East Sea issue under international law and agreed to support each other in multilateral platforms. They extended mutual invitations for official visits through diplomatic arrangements.
17th - 21st	Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat made a working visit to the ROK. In Seoul, he met Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Dr Lee Ju-ho, Senior Secretary for Science and Technology Professor Dr Park Sang-wook and Bank of Korea Governor Dr Rhee Chang-yong, reaffirming strong bilateral ties and plans to elevate relations to a Strategic Partnership in 2025, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Singapore-ROK diplomatic relations. Heng also engaged with ROK corporate leaders, start-ups and academics to explore collaboration in regional economic integration, science and technology, and addressing shared challenges like ageing population. In Gyeonggi province, he met Governor Dr Kim Dong-yeon and discussed potential cooperation in AI, science, technology and youth exchanges. He visited Pangyo Technovalley and Gwanggyo Bio Hub to observe the province's innovation initiatives before returning to Singapore.

20th	The 18th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) convened in Vientiane, Laos. The meeting adopted the "Vientiane Joint Declaration" under the theme "Together for Peace, Security, and Resilience". It acknowledged regional security challenges, including geopolitical dynamics, climate change and non-traditional threats, while emphasising ASEAN's commitment to maintaining peace, security and unity. Participants also reaffirmed support for the South China Sea Code of Conduct, the Five-Point Consensus in Myanmar and capacity-building through ADMM-Plus initiatives. Key outcomes included approving future-ready strategies, enhancing maritime cooperation and welcoming Timor-Leste's observer participation. The meeting commended Laos' chairmanship, expressed appreciation for Indonesia's prior leadership and welcomed Malaysia as the 2025 ASEAN chairman.
20th - 21st	The ASEAN-Korea Centre co-hosted the "Digital Technologies Driving Sustainable Tourism Transformation" seminar with Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports in Bangkok, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank. Experts from Korea and the region explored the role of digital technology in advancing sustainable tourism across ASEAN. Topics included leveraging AI, big data and extended reality for smarter, more sustainable tourism. The seminar also highlighted the ASEAN-Korea Centre's ongoing efforts to strengthen ASEAN's tourism competitiveness through digital initiatives and collaborative programmes.
21st	The Vietnam-ROK Investment Cooperation Forum was held at the National Innovation Centre in Hanoi, highlighting the deepening economic ties between Vietnam and the ROK. The event, sponsored by the Industrial Bank of Korea (IBK), brought together key stakeholders to discuss opportunities for investment and collaboration. Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Hoa Binh delivered a keynote address, urging South Korean businesses to expand investments in high-tech industries, including semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation. He emphasised the significance of the Vietnam-ROK comprehensive strategic partnership in fostering collaboration across value chains, economic security and climate change mitigation. In a separate meeting with Kim Sung-tae, chairman and CEO of IBK, Binh commended the bank's sponsorship of the forum and its contributions to Vietnam's economic development, particularly its support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). He encouraged IBK to expand its efforts in Vietnam, citing the significant role of SMEs in the country's economy, which comprises nearly one million enterprises contributing 40% to GDP and employing 60% of the workforce. Binh assured IBK of the government's support for its long-term investments in Vietnam. Kim highlighted IBK's global operations, including its branches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and expressed optimism about deepening partnerships in Vietnam, particularly in energy projects and sustainable investments.
21st	The ROK-ASEAN National Defence Summit was held in Vientiane, Laos on the sidelines of the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) to commemorate 35 years of ASEAN-ROK dialogue relations. The summit served as a platform to review ASEAN-ROK defence ties and outlined future collaboration under their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Discussions focused on key principles, including ASEAN's central role in regional security, adherence to international law and mutual benefits. South Korean Minister of National Defence Kim Yong Hyun proposed initiatives such as maritime security projects, defence industry cooperation and peacekeeping efforts, including plans for an ASEAN-ROK maritime exercise in 2026. He also emphasised the importance of the Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative in enhancing regional peace and stability, particularly on the Korean Peninsula. Laos' Defence Minister Chansamone Chanyalath commended ROK's contributions to ASEAN relations and called for continued trust-based collaboration. In addition to the summit, Kim held bilateral talks with his counterparts from Laos, Thailand, Japan and India to discuss advancing security and defence partnerships.
22nd	The 15th ASEAN-ROK Transport Ministers Meeting (ATM+ROK) was held and co-chaired by Malaysian Transport Minister Loke Siew Fook and South Korean Transport Minister Sangwoo Park, following the 16th Senior Transport Officials Meeting on 20 November. Participants reviewed progress under the ASEAN-ROK Transport Cooperation Roadmap 2021–2025, highlighting achievements in human resource development, consulting projects and smart technology applications. They supported adding sustainable transport and urban mobility projects to the post-2025 roadmap. The meeting also discussed the forthcoming "Gap Analysis Study on the Digitalisation of Public Transport and Delivery Services", aligned with the Kuala Lumpur Transport Strategic Plan, and endorsed a proposed smart mobility graduate programme for ASEAN citizens under the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund. Progress on the ASEAN-ROK Air Services Agreement was acknowledged, with calls to accelerate efforts to enhance air connectivity. The 16th ATM+ROK Meeting is scheduled for 2025.

24th-26th	Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim paid his first official visit to South Korea, marking a significant step in Malaysia-South Korea relations. During a meeting on 25 November, Anwar and President Yoon Suk Yeol formally announced the elevation of bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership, focusing on peace and security, economic collaboration, cultural and educational exchanges, and regional cooperation. Discussions included defence and security collaboration, addressing cybercrime and drug trafficking, and expediting negotiations for an FTA by 2025. The two leaders committed to advancing emerging sectors such as the halal economy, digital innovation, clean energy and health care. On the same day, the Korea-Malaysia Business Forum was held, co-hosted by the Malaysian Investment Development Authority and Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation. Consisting of over 200 representatives from both countries' government and institutions, discussions consisted of investment challenges faced by Korean companies in Malaysia, and areas such as smart agriculture, 5G technology and AI. On the sidelines of the summit, South Korea's Trade Minister Inkyo Cheong and Malaysia's Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz met to expedite FTA negotiations, advance green hydrogen and carbon capture projects, and resolve challenges faced by Korean firms in Malaysia. A landmark MOU on carbon capture and storage was signed between South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy and Malaysia's Ministry of Economy, providing a framework for collaboration on cross-border carbon capture and storage. Additionally, three industry-focused MOUs were signed, covering minerals, trade and hydrogen. On 26 November, Anwar met leaders of prominent South Korean conglomerates, including Samsung, POSCO, SK Nexilis, OCI Holdings and Lotte. Tengku Zafrul Aziz announced a strategic partnership between Hyundai Motor and INOKOM to assemble six new car models, including hybrid electric vehicles, in Malaysia starting in 2025 through a RM2.16 billion investment. This project, Hyundai's largest investment in Malaysia over six years, includes upgrading INOKOM's assembly capacity and building an EV battery pack assembly facility in Kedah, creating high-tech job opportunities for locals. Anwar also delivered a keynote address at Seoul National University titled, "Strategic Partners in a Complex World: Malaysia, Korea, and the Future of Asia", emphasising the significance of the partnership. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to deepen ties ahead of the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2025, with South Korea expressing support for Malaysia's ASEAN chairmanship. The leaders also celebrated Malaysia's Look East Policy, announced plans to expand technical and vocational education and training cooperation, and highlighted growing bilateral trade, which reached RM111.07 billion in 2023.
25th	South Korea's MOTIE convened a roundtable in Seoul chaired by Trade Minister Inkyo Cheong to discuss strategies for addressing potential shifts in US trade policies under President-elect Donald Trump and their impact on Korean businesses operating in Vietnam. The event was attended by representatives from key ministries, institutions and major corporations, including Korea International Trade Association, Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, Samsung Electronics and Pohang Iron and Steel Company. Cheong emphasised the ministry's plan to leverage communication channels with Vietnam, such as the upcoming joint committee on bilateral FTA, to minimise uncertainties and safeguard Korean firms. Vietnam, South Korea's third-largest trading partner, hosts approximately 9,000 Korean companies across industries like electronics, semiconductors and textiles. MOTIE reaffirmed its commitment to monitoring global trade developments and engaging actively with industries to address emerging challenges and ensure stable operations for Korean enterprises.
25th - 27th	The ASEAN-ROK Day event themed, "Towards Enhanced ASEAN-ROK Partnership in Creative Economy", took place in Bangkok, Thailand. Co-hosted by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the ROK, the event gathered representatives from ASEAN member states, Timor-Leste, ROK, the ASEAN Secretariat and related agencies. It featured four key sessions: a seminar on ASEAN-ROK creative economy collaboration, talks on creative sectors, an ASEAN-ROK creative showcase and a concert by ROK Navy Symphonic Band. The seminar provided a platform for participants to discuss strengthening ASEAN-ROK partnerships in the creative economy and identifying regional opportunities through enhanced cooperation. Myanmar's delegation, led by the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also participated in the event.
26th	The Korea-Vietnam Global Technology Transfer Partnership Day was held at COEX Trade Centre in Seoul to facilitate agreements between Korean SMEs exporting technology and Vietnamese companies seeking technological solutions. Organised by South Korea's Ministry of SMEs and Startups, the initiative operates through the Global Smart Tech Bridge platform, which enables technology transactions. Since mid-2024, the ministry has collaborated with Korea Technology Finance Corporation and private organisations in Vietnam to assess technological needs, resulting in 19 Vietnamese companies and 53 Korean SMEs identified for potential collaboration, with eight successful matches so far. Kim Woo Soon, head of the Technology Innovation Policy Division, highlighted the project as a key driver for revitalising technology exports among Korean SMEs and expanding the model to other countries.

26th	Cambodia and South Korea reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening crime prevention and building Cambodian human resource capacity during a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sar Sokha and South Korean Ambassador Park Jung-Wook in Phnom Penh. Discussions centred on enhancing professional training for Cambodian police and prison security officials to handle criminal cases more effectively, including transnational crimes. Both parties emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts in crime prevention and praised the strong bilateral relations, which have fostered significant mutual benefits and achievements.
27th	The “Global Health Roundtable with Ambassadors in Korea” held at the National Assembly, fostered collaboration between Korea and seven Asia-Pacific countries: Laos, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Mongolia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Co-hosted by the Korean Parliamentary Forum on Global Health and the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare, the event included parliamentarians, ambassadors and representatives from Korean healthcare agencies such as the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, and Korea International Cooperation Agency. Discussions centred on strengthening health infrastructure, pandemic preparedness, human resource development and digital health innovations. Philippine Ambassador Theresa Dizon-De Vega outlined the Universal Healthcare Law and emphasised opportunities under the Philippines-Korea Strategic Partnership in areas like vaccine research and equitable healthcare financing. Korean healthcare organisations introduced ongoing official development assistance projects tailored to regional needs. Chair Jumin Park described the roundtable as a pivotal step towards sustainable healthcare partnerships, with plans to integrate the insights into future policies and cooperative initiatives.
30th	The Asia Tourism Development Institute (ATI) and Korea Tourism Management Association held a conference in Hanoi to promote tourism, trade and education cooperation between Vietnam and South Korea. Nguyen Quy Phuong from Vietnam’s National Authority of Tourism noted that South Korea was Vietnam’s largest source of international tourists in 2024, with 3.7 million Korean visitors in the first 10 months, an indication of Vietnam’s popularity among Korean travellers. Phuong urged enhanced bilateral tourism exchanges through digital marketing, improved aviation connectivity, simplified visa procedures and expanded youth and educational programmes. Ruy In Pyong, president of the Korean Tourism Management Association, stressed collaboration between tourism entities and academic institutions, pledging support for Vietnam’s tourism. Kim Hyun, director of Chungbuk’s Tourism Department, acknowledged Vietnam’s significant visitor numbers to Chungbuk and pledged to strengthen partnerships through joint tourism products, conferences and cultural exchanges. ATI also signed cooperation agreements with several South Korean tourism organisations during the event.

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1st - 4th	The ROK Army hosted an international forum on logistics cooperation at the Army Logistics Command in Daejeon, with participation from six ASEAN member states, including Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines, alongside nine other nations, such as the United States and Australia. Discussions focused on South Korea’s Indo-Pacific strategy, defence collaboration with ASEAN members, and advancing international logistics cooperation. Established in 2021 to strengthen multilateral logistics partnerships, the forum aligns with South Korea’s goal of becoming a leading global defence exporter.
2nd	The ASEAN-Korea Centre organised a seminar titled, “Unlocking Opportunities in the Digital Era: Emerging Technologies and Best Practices to Enhance the Tourism Industry”, in Siem Reap. Held in partnership with Cambodia’s Ministry of Tourism, the event aimed to support Cambodia’s digital transition in tourism by focusing on emerging technologies and best practices to improve management, processes and promotion. Speakers included Cambodian Deputy Tourism Director Phyrum Manit, Dr Shin Hak-seung, a professor from Hanyang University, and CEOs from Visit Inc. and SOPHIYA Travel and Tours. They discussed digitalisation, smart tourism and marketing strategies.
3rd	The Vietnamese Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) hosted a workshop in Da Nang to encourage energy efficiency investment in Vietnam’s industrial sector. Quach Quang Dong, deputy director of MoIT’s Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Development Department, emphasised energy security’s priority in national policies and highlighted the Vietnam Energy Efficiency Programme 2019–2030, which aims to save 8%–10% of total energy consumption by 2030. Since 2021, KOICA and MoIT have collaborated on improving industrial energy efficiency, involving energy audits for 20 enterprises in key sectors and identifying 366 energy-saving solutions, with a potential savings of 144,000 TOE annually. The project also developed energy consumption benchmarks and technical guidelines for several industries. At the workshop, six presentations covered the project’s outcomes, energy-audit models and funding mechanisms such as Saigon - Hanoi Commercial Stock Bank’s Risk Sharing Fund.

9th	A delegation from the Korean Red Cross Blood Services (KRCBS) was in a meeting with representatives of the Lao Red Cross (LRC) in Vientiane to discuss strengthening cooperation in blood services. The meeting included a handover ceremony where KRCBS provided three minibuses and six tube sealers, valued at US\$123,200, to enhance blood collection efforts in the Lao PDR. These resources, intended for mobile blood donation activities in the National Blood Transfusion Institute and provinces like Oudomxay and Louangnamtha, are in line with an ongoing project to promote voluntary blood donation and improve collection infrastructure. KRCBS Director-General Kwon So-Yong reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to supporting LRC through training and technical supervision, while LRC President Khamlavanh Chanthavanh expressed gratitude, emphasising the goal to raise the national blood donation rate to over 1% of the population annually.
10th	General Director of the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) Vu Viet Trang and Yonhap News Agency President Hwang Dae-il gathered in Hanoi to discuss ways to enhance collaboration between their agencies. Trang highlighted the Vietnam-ROK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and commended their ongoing cooperation under a 2022 agreement, including journalist exchanges and regular direct discussions. Hwang expressed appreciation for VNA's support of Yonhap's initiatives, particularly its pilot Vietnamese-language news service. This service, which uses AI for translation, has received positive feedback. He sought VNA's recommendations for improving the service, which aims to strengthen Vietnam-ROK ties and foster mutual understanding. Trang agreed to support the initiative and assigned VNA units to assist with refining AI translations and promoting the service. Both leaders emphasised the importance of experience-sharing in digital transformation and advanced technologies like AI and robotics to improve efficiency.
10th - 11th	The ASEAN Online Forum on the Future of Work convened policymakers and practitioners to address workforce challenges in ASEAN, focusing on inclusivity for persons with disabilities (PwDs), women and informal workers. Deputy Secretary-General San Lwin underscored ASEAN's commitment to inclusive human resource development (HRD), while Park Yoon-joo of the Korean Mission to ASEAN highlighted the forum's role in fostering knowledge exchange. The discussions addressed eliminating workforce barriers for PwDs through digital transformation and assistive technologies, featuring case studies from organisations like Virtualahan (Philippines) and Vulcan Coalition (Thailand). The forum also explored HRD strategies, emphasising flexible work arrangements, fair wages and social protections for women and informal workers, with contributions from ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network and other regional bodies. The forum was supported by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund as part of ASEAN's broader effort to address regional workforce megatrends.
11th	A delegation from Nhan Dan (People) Newspaper, led by Editor-in-Chief Le Quoc Minh, met Yonhap News Agency President and CEO Hwang Dae-il in Hanoi to discuss digital transformation and bilateral cooperation in journalism. Minh announced plans to launch a Korean-language version of Nhan Dan in 2025 to enhance information sharing and strengthen Vietnam-ROK relations. Highlighting the need for innovation in modern journalism, he emphasised efforts to adapt to reader needs and shared plans for AI training for 5,000 Vietnamese journalists next year. Hwang praised the practical cooperation between Yonhap and Vietnamese media and expressed hope for further collaboration with Nhan Dan. Both sides discussed opportunities to advance digital transformation in journalism and address shared challenges.
12th	Vietnam's National Assembly Chairman Tran Thanh Man affirmed the country's commitment to supporting businesses from the ROK during a meeting with Samsung Vietnam's General Director Choi Joo Ho in Hanoi. Man highlighted Vietnam's favourable legal framework and long-standing diplomatic ties with the ROK, which have strengthened since the 2022 upgrade to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. He noted that the ROK remains Vietnam's top foreign investor and encouraged Samsung to assist domestic enterprises in joining its supply chain and to collaborate on projects at Vietnam's National Innovation Centre. Man expressed hope that Samsung would expand its role as a strategic investor, particularly in supporting the chip and semiconductor industries. Choi Joo Ho reiterated Samsung's priority investment in Vietnam and outlined plans to establish the world's largest display manufacturing facility in Bac Ninh. He also welcomed the feedback from Vietnam's National Assembly Standing Committee on a draft decree for an investment support fund and expressed optimism for its implementation to enhance the business environment.
12th	The Vietnamese National Financial Supervisory Commission, in collaboration with KOICA, held an international conference titled, "Vietnam's Financial Market: Perspectives and Policy Orientations", in Ninh Thuan. As part of a KOICA-funded project aimed at enhancing Vietnam's ability in early warning and contingency management within the financial sector, the conference focused on the global economic impacts on Vietnam, financial market outlook for 2025 and the identification of risk. Acting Vice-Chairman Vu Nhu Thang highlighted the conference's role in supporting the commission's recommendations to the prime minister. Jung Jae Woo of KOICA Vietnam noted Vietnam's rising economic significance and emphasised the project's focus on early crisis detection and preparedness.

13th	The Cambodia Chamber of Commerce (CCC) hosted a delegation from the Gyeonggi-do Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), led by President Bae Hae-dong. The meeting, facilitated by CCC Vice-President Lim Socheat, aimed to enhance bilateral cooperation. Lim assured the Korean delegation of support in overcoming challenges and encouraged partnerships with Cambodian businesses. Bae commended Cambodia's industrial growth and emphasised the importance of fostering economic and industrial collaboration.
14th	The Cambodia-Korea Business and Investment Forum, organised by the Ministry of Commerce, took place during the Cambodia Trade Expo. The forum was attended by South Korean investors, Cambodian officials and private sector representatives, including Suon Sophal, deputy secretary-general of the Cambodian Investment Board. Sophal highlighted Cambodia's political stability, strategic location, young workforce and investment incentives as factors attracting Korean financiers. Discussions focused on leveraging the Cambodia-Korea FTA and the development of special economic zones to encourage Korean investment, particularly in agriculture and agro-processing.
15th	Three Bruneian students and two officials attended the 14th ASEAN+3 Student Camp for the Gifted in Science and the 16th ASEAN+3 Teacher Workshop for the Gifted in Science held at Seoul National University of Education, South Korea. The workshop was organised by the ASEAN+3 Centre for the Gifted in Science and supported by South Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT and Korea Foundation for Science and Creativity. It included seminars, hands-on activities and a visit to Seoul Science High School. The programme, themed "From Prediction to Protection: The Role of Science in Responding to Natural Disasters", aimed to foster collaboration among gifted students and educators while enhancing teaching competencies. Brunei's delegation, coordinated by the Centre for the Development of Gifted and Talented Education under the Ministry of Education, featured presentations on gifted education.
16th	A delegation led by Oh Myung Hwan, president of the ROK-Laos Friendship Association, met their counterparts in Vientiane for the 13th annual meeting of the Korea-Laos Friendship Associations. The meeting, attended by Korean Ambassador Jung Yung Soo and other representatives, reviewed the past year's achievements, including collaborations in education, agriculture, public health and human resource development. Key contributions included school construction and the provision of medical supplies and educational equipment for low-income communities. Both sides discussed plans for joint activities in the coming year, agreeing to deepen collaboration, promote mutual understanding and enhance ties.
17th	The National Asian Culture Centre (ACC) of the ROK hosted a ceremony at the National Museum in Vientiane to mark the publication of the Lao palm leaf manuscript catalogues and the release of their digital readings. The event, part of ACC's Official Development Assistance project to digitise cultural heritage, was attended by the Deputy Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Dalany Phommavongsa, Korean Ambassador Jung Young-soo and ACC President Lee Kang-hyun. Key achievements included translating two rare manuscripts into modern Lao and making related videos accessible via the Lao Cultural Portal. The initiative, in alignment with the Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative, aimed to preserve and utilise Lao cultural heritage using Korean digital technology, transforming it into a global tourism asset and enhancing bilateral cooperation.
17th	Trade Minister Inkyo Cheong of South Korea hosted the "ASEAN-ROK Think Tank Dialogue on Economic and Trade Policy" (AKTD) roundtable in Seoul, attended by 30 participants, including ASEAN ambassadors, representatives from the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), and the ASEAN Secretariat. The AKTD, set to launch in 2025, will involve government-funded research institutes from Korea and ASEAN countries conducting joint studies on trade and economic policies, focusing on areas like supply chains and carbon-free energy. Findings will be shared at ASEAN-Korea economic ministers' meetings and forums. Cheong highlighted AKTD as the first major project under the new Korea-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and sought strong support from ASEAN representatives. Plans for the initiative were presented by the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade and ERIA, with ERIA President Tetsuya Watanabe expressing hopes for AKTD to symbolise stable cooperation. The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy will finalise participating ASEAN think tanks, lead research efforts and host the inaugural AKTD conference in early 2025.
17 - 18th	The fifth operational meeting of the ASEAN-ROK Cultural Heritage Working Committee, led by the Korea Heritage Service (KHS) and supported by the ASEAN Secretariat and the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO, took place in Jakarta, Indonesia. This meeting, following the elevation of ASEAN-ROK relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the 25th ASEAN-ROK Summit, focused on enhancing cultural heritage cooperation. KHS updated ASEAN member states on the Shared Cultural Heritage Cooperation Project and shared findings from a preliminary review of the committee's first term (2022–2024) to guide strategies for the second term (2025–2027). Outcomes of domestic projects, including policy dialogues and shared heritage research, were also presented to align efforts and secure support for future collaborative initiatives.

17 - 19th	South Korea and Thailand held the third round of negotiations for the Korea-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement in Bangkok, led by Korea's Deputy Minister for FTA Negotiations Roh Keon-ki and Thailand's Director General of the Department of Trade Negotiations Chotima lemsawasdikul. Discussions expanded to include communications, finance, environment, labour and sustainable development, alongside ongoing topics like goods, services, investment and intellectual property. Roh emphasised the Korean government's efforts to enhance global competitiveness through trade diversification and export promotion, noting Thailand's strategic importance as a key ASEAN partner with a complementary industrial structure.
18th	Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs played host to a meeting between Park Yongmin, ambassador of the ROK to Thailand and Piyapak Sricharoen, director-general of the Department of East Asian Affairs. Ambassador Park provided updates on recent political developments in ROK, while Director-General Piyapak expressed gratitude for the information, affirmed Thailand's confidence in the ROK's ability to navigate its political situation and reiterated Thailand's commitment to enhancing the bilateral Strategic Partnership, which has brought mutual benefits to both nations.
20th	Vietnamese Ambassador to the DPRK Le Ba Vinh and Military Attaché Phan Tien Lam hosted a reception at the Taedonggang Diplomatic Club to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Vietnam People's Army. Attendees included DPRK Vice-Minister of National Defence Kim Kang Il, Korean People's Army officers, foreign diplomatic envoys, military attachés and Vietnamese embassy staff. The event featured speeches honouring the occasion.
24th	The South Korean government revised its trade investigation law to include the Philippines in its list of countries subject to safeguard measures, ahead of the bilateral FTA taking effect on 31 December. The revised enforcement decree allows South Korea to implement measures, such as emergency tariffs or suspensions of tariff-free policies, to protect domestic industries in case of a surge in imports from the Philippines due to the FTA. Safeguards lasting over a year will be gradually eased, aligning with the FTA's aim to promote bilateral trade. This is South Korea's fifth bilateral FTA with an ASEAN member, following agreements with Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia, as part of the efforts to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties with emerging nations.
26th	The General Department of Vietnam Customs and the ROK Customs Service signed a mutual recognition agreement (MRA) on authorised economic operators establishing a legal framework to enhance customs efficiency and provide long-term benefits for businesses. The MRA aligns with global trends, fostering competitive advantages, streamlining customs clearance, reducing compliance costs and supporting secure international supply chains. Vietnamese priority enterprises will receive preferential treatment domestically and under the MRA, boosting economic integration and attracting participation in the priority programme. The agreement also facilitates the Vietnam-ROK Free Trade Agreement and WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, reflecting strong bilateral trust and expanding collaboration.

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.