

The Yoon Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative: From Vision to Reality?

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Conservative candidate Yoon Suk Yeol narrowly won his presidential election in March 2022 and assumed the office of president two months after. Seeking a larger and more ambitious role for the Republic of Korea (ROK) as an upper middle power in the international system, Yoon and his foreign policy team swiftly initiated three core ideas in concentric circles of geographical scale — ROK as a Global Pivotal State, a Korean Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) and the Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI). This essay seeks to examine the essence of the IPS and KASI, the challenges these concepts would face in turning vision into reality and offers a few suggestions from a Southeast Asian perspective to boost KASI for mutual benefits.

IPS

South Korea is a latecomer to adopt the IPS. It was the late Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo who first promoted this concept. The United States, Australia and India subsequently embraced the idea. While clinging on to ASEAN Centrality (ASEAN-centric multilateralism in East Asia), Southeast Asian states have adopted an ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Arguably, the linking of two oceans, the Indian and the Pacific, and the recognition of India's rising geo-strategic weight, have superseded the earlier concepts of the Asia Pacific and the East Asian Community.

The ROK's IPS does not mimic the United States' and its moniker of the IPS. In the case of the United States, its IPS has the strong colouring of a muscular push back against a more assertive China. However, the ROK's IPS does not have military overtones. Its essence is freedom, peace and prosperity. By openly declaring freedom as a value, the Yoon administration has placed the ROK firmly in the community of democracies which include the United States, Japan, Australia, India, Canada and the EU. The regional scope of the Korean IPS broadly covers the North Pacific, Southeast Asia and ASEAN, South Asia, Oceania, the African coast of the Indian Ocean, Europe and Latin America.

The Yoon administration's principles of cooperation for IPS are inclusiveness, trust and reciprocity. The IPS declares: "Our Strategy is an inclusive initiative that neither targets nor excludes any particular country". However, China and North Korea are likely to view the South Korean IPS to be in the same ideological camp of the United States and its allies.

Notwithstanding the inclusive and peaceful intent of South Korea, China would presumably watch the Yoon administration's foreign policy *behaviour* (operational policy) such as strengthening its comprehensive ties (including trilateral security cooperation and intelligence sharing) with the United States and Japan rather than

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to be convinced by South Korea's declaratory policy. Simply put, China does not necessarily buy into South Korea's rhetoric that its IPS is inclusive. It is not inconceivable that China may turn the economic screw on ROK again (such as the continual ban on Chinese group tourism to South Korea, closure of more Korean department stores and greater restrictions of Korean cultural exports to China). Beijing would probably retaliate if the Yoon administration were to fully deploy the US Terminal High-Altitude Air Defence (THAAD) missile system deemed to be a threat by the Chinese.

Despite difficult diplomatic relations with China (ROK's most important economic partner), the Korean IPS wisely advocates the resumption of the ROK-Japan-China Trilateral Summit, reinforcing the capacity and structure of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS). It also proposes the strengthening of trilateral environmental and digital cooperation. Perhaps in a future refinement of the IPS, the Yoon administration may wish to consider regional cooperation between TCS and the ASEAN Secretariat. Indeed, the ASEAN Way of consensus regardless of regime types in Southeast Asia that seeks peaceful co-existence and cooperation in diplomacy, economics and culture is a better model for TCS than the EU.

...CHINA DOES NOT NECESSARILY BUY INTO SOUTH KOREA'S RHETORIC THAT ITS IPS IS INCLUSIVE. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT CHINA MAY TURN THE ECONOMIC SCREW ON ROK AGAIN (SUCH AS THE CONTINUAL BAN ON CHINESE GROUP TOURISM TO SOUTH KOREA, CLOSURE OF MORE KOREAN DEPARTMENT STORES AND GREATER RESTRICTIONS OF KOREAN CULTURAL EXPORTS TO CHINA).

KASI

KASI can be interpreted as a sub-set of the Korean IPS. It can also be viewed as a reincarnation and an upgrade from the preceding Moon administration's New Southern Policy (NSP) towards ASEAN and India. Unlike the NSP which emphasised diplomatic, economic and cultural cooperation, KASI is not coy on security cooperation with Southeast Asia. Seoul proposes at least four items which the NSP was silent on: (i) building regional order based on norms and rules, (ii) cooperating to promote rule of law and human rights, (iii) strengthening non-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts across the region, and (iv) expanding comprehensive security cooperation.

Within the KASI framework, ROK will increase ASEAN-related cooperation funds to US\$48 million per annum by 2027. These include:

- ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF): US\$32 million
- Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF): US\$10 million
- BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Philippines East Asian Growth Area)-ROK Cooperation Fund (BKCF): US\$6 million.

The Way Forward for ASEAN-South Korea Cooperation?

KASI is very much a work-in-progress contingent on the sustained cooperation between ROK and ASEAN member states. Even if President Yoon's successor were to rebrand KASI, it would be a good foundation for future ROK administrations to build on. A future-oriented KASI could include:

- Upgrading the ASEAN-ROK FTA including the digital domain even though ASEAN member states are at different stages of economic development and
- Envisaging the ASEAN-11: support capacity building of Timor-Leste for a stronger ASEAN Community

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- Establishing a Korea-ASEAN Infrastructure Bank (KAIB) for the Mekong region, East Timor and the future reunification of the Korean peninsula. This is a question of political will. This proposal is a non-starter without the interest of top political leaders of ROK and ASEAN. Perhaps an epistemological community in Korea and ASEAN should promote this and catch the eye of visionary political leaders who dare to do what the United States (World Bank), Japan (Asian Development Bank) and China (Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank) have already done. It is not preordained that only great powers can establish infrastructure banks. The HQ of KAIB can be in Seoul or Busan and the KAIB president rotated between a Korean and a Southeast Asian citizen;
- Promoting human security which includes (i) helping North Korean refugees in Southeast Asia seeking to relocate to ROK and (ii) aiding the Rohingya refugees of Myanmar;
- Supporting each other to win the directorships of various UN Agencies. To be a true Global Pivotal State, there is a need for the ROK to take a lead in global governance. This necessitates the diplomatic support and votes of ASEAN member states if the ROK seeks to lead in various UN agencies;
- Participating in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (joint battalions comprising troops or police

from Korean, Japanese and ASEAN member states with rotating commanders); and

- Engaging in conservation efforts to protect endangered species: to share scientific knowledge, harness the idealism of the young and work with non-governmental organisations to prevent the extinction of flora and fauna in Northeast and Southeast Asia amid climate change, deforestation and ocean pollution.

Epilogue

The IPS and KASI are milestones of South Korea's foreign policy which reflect its will and capability as an upper middle power. Amid the tricky US-China superpower competition, it would be prudent for small and middle powers in East Asia to cooperate with each other for greater autonomy and agency in the international system and various multilateral frameworks. Although the Yoon administration has an "audacious plan" and a tough posture towards a relentlessly nuclearising North Korea, it should tacitly welcome ASEAN member states such as Singapore and Vietnam (the two hosts of the Trump-Kim Summits in the city-state and Hanoi respectively) to assist in discreetly and sincerely reaching out to the DPRK and organising peace summits again at an opportune moment. Afterall, a facet of ROK's IPS, besides freedom and prosperity, is peace.

The Spirit of Camp David

Justin V Hastings

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The Spirit of Camp David joint statement announced on 18 August 2023 by President Yoon Suk-yeol of South Korea (Republic of Korea or ROK), Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan and President Joe Biden of the United States is designed to signal a new relationship among Japan, South Korea and the United States. The agreement was a partial triumph for the United States, which has long had aspirations to bring Japan and South Korea together, particularly in the face of challenges from China.

Both South Korea and Japan are treaty allies of the United States, and the weak link in the trilateral relationship has always been the tumultuous relationship between Japan and South Korea. The agreement itself was made between the executive branches of the three countries and is not a binding treaty ratified by their legislatures. This is understandable – a ratifiable treaty with Japan would be political poison in South Korea where the National Assembly is controlled by the opposition Democratic Party and Yoon Suk-yeol is an unpopular incumbent.

Anti-Japanese sentiment has often been used as a basis for mobilisation in South Korean politics, particularly by left-wing groups. When South Korea has left-wing presidents, any agreements with Japan are prone to be cut off during a downturn in relations, such as when South Korea terminated its military intelligence-sharing agreement with Japan in 2019. Japanese nationalist groups, some of whom maintain a relationship with Liberal Democratic Party politicians, will often engage in activities which downplay or

ANTI-JAPANESE SENTIMENT HAS OFTEN BEEN USED AS A BASIS FOR MOBILISATION IN SOUTH KOREAN POLITICS, PARTICULARLY BY LEFT-WING GROUPS.

deny Japanese culpability in World War II, or occasionally reaffirm Japanese claims on territories in dispute with South Korea, which can in turn set off a reaction from South Korean activist groups. For their part, South Korean activist groups often push their own campaigns that can put pressure on South Korean administrations that might want better relations with Japan.

To survive downturns in the South Korea-Japan relationship without creating a ratifiable treaty, the Spirit of Camp David agreements must be institutionalised – the processes for cooperation, working relationships of the officials involved and sub-agreements associated with implementing the Spirit of Camp David must be developed to enable continuity even with irritations in South Korea-Japan ties.

The three countries' leaders are clearly aware of this: attempts to institutionalise the trilateral relationship are built into the Spirit of Camp David joint statement. The trilateral nature of the agreement is in part designed to overcome

speedbumps in the ROK-Japan relationship. In a trilateral situation, the South Korean and Japanese leadership would be able to meet in the same room even during a downturn in relations because they are technically meeting with the United States. The commitment to regular meetings of the leaders, and foreign, defence, finance, industry and commerce ministers, as well as national security advisers of all three countries, while not impervious to roadblocks, will at least routinise high-level meetings, perhaps to the point that they will be seen as unremarkable, with little political downside to continuing to meet through bilateral speed bumps.

Although all three countries commit in the statement to planning implementation platforms for closer technical cooperation, as with any agreement, it remains to be seen how they will actually play out. In the thorniest issue of military cooperation, the three countries commit to “annual, named, multi-domain trilateral exercises on a regular basis to enhance our coordinated capabilities and cooperation”. As military exercises are the kinds of cooperative activities that are scaled back during downturns in relations, it is the other programmes that are less flashy but also less politically charged – cooperation among national laboratories, emerging technologies and most relevant to security, early warning information sharing on North Korean ballistic missile launches – that may bind Japan and South Korea.

All three countries also now have Indo-Pacific Strategies that are broadly similar in their emphases and direction, one that is based on a free and open Indo-Pacific, with liberal values and a rules-based international order. This allows all three countries to state shared goals of their vision for the Indo-Pacific. While these strategies could, of course, be

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modified by future administrations of each country, their unified vision could give South Koreans fewer reasons to shy away from a strategic vision critical of China.

In the agreement, for example, all three countries made a strong, unified statement condemning China’s behaviour in the South China Sea, and a more general and measured statement on Taiwan. The fact that South Korea was willing to make a statement about Taiwan at all shows that it is moving towards a more assertive position vis-à-vis China.

South Korea has traditionally sought close relations with China, or has at least sought to minimise shocks to ROK-China relations due to the importance of China in managing the challenge of North Korea, and due to South Korea’s trade dependence on China. The cracks in South Korea’s relationship with China have been showing for years, but have become more pronounced under Yoon Suk-yeol. Moon Jae-in was perceived as a “pro-China” South Korean president; he never criticised China openly and tailored his New Southern Policy to avoid antagonising China. Notwithstanding Moon’s tolerance, he still went ahead with the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence and weathered the resulting Chinese boycott. It was this boycott and China’s later veto of new sanctions and seeming lack of disapproval of North Korea’s missile tests after the brief thaw in 2018 that have seen a change in South Korean policy towards China. If China is unwilling or unable to restrain North Korea, a genuine existential threat to South Korea, and if China is willing to hold South Korea’s trade dependence to ransom in the event of policy non-compliance, the ROK sees no reason to cosy up to China.

Yoon has not actively sought to antagonise China and even pledged good relations with China in a meeting with Xi Jinping in Jakarta in November 2022. However, what has changed is that, under Yoon, South Korea is less willing to make decisions or even make statements for the purpose of placating China. In the context of South Korea’s broader policy shift in the Indo-Pacific, in April 2023, South Korea was opposed to using force to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait; it also recognised Taiwan as a global issue (implicitly of concern to South Korea), just as North Korea was, a stance which drew a furious response from China, and no apology from South Korea. In June 2023, South Korea took offence to the statement made by China’s ambassador to South Korea that South Korea would regret moving towards the United States, kickstarting yet another diplomatic spat with China. This has come at a time when the United States is overtaking China as the main recipient of South Korean exports.

South Korea’s new position is one that may outlast the Yoon administration due to changes in South Korea’s strategic environment; the challenge posed by China may in fact be the glue that keep Japan and South Korea together through irritants in their relations.

Highlights at the Korea Centre



(Top Left) EAP Editorial Board Meeting with Prof Limaye Satu, vice president of the East West Centre and the director of the East-West Centre in Washington



(Top Right) Meeting with Dr Min Young Seo, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, and his colleague

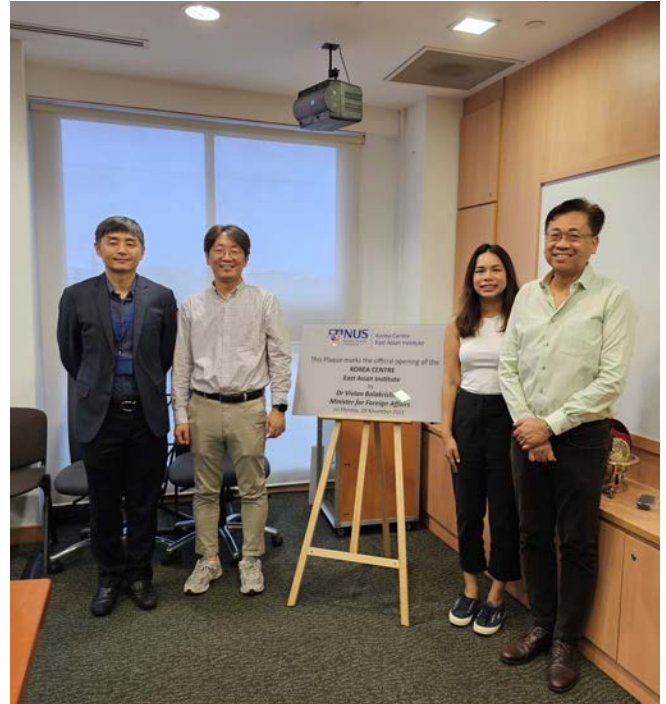
(Bottom Left) Dr Lam Peng Er as a speaker at the Korea Global Forum in Seoul

(Bottom Right) Dr Lam Peng Er with President of Sejong Institute, Dr Lee Sang-Hyun at the Korea Global Forum in Seoul





(Photos above) Meeting with the Republic of Korea delegation led by Dr Bo Ram Kwon, Research Fellow, Korea Institute for Defence Analyses and Dr Woo Jung-Yeop, director general for strategy at the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The topics of discussion included the Republic of Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Korea ASEAN Solidarity Initiative.



(Top Left) Meeting with Mr Kent Harstedt, former Swedish Special Envoy to the Korean Peninsula

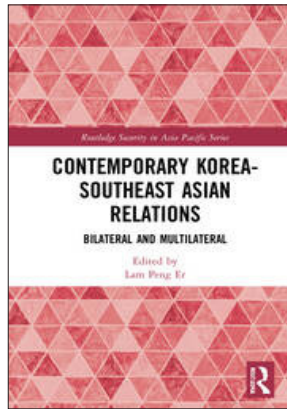
(Top Right) Meeting with Mr Byon Minwon, Hyundai EV in Singapore

(Bottom) With His Excellency Democratic People's Republic of Korea Ambassador to Singapore Mr Kim Chol Nam (second from left) and Chairman of the Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore Mr Bilahari Kausikan (second from right)



Recent Publications

Contemporary Korea-Southeast Asian Relations: Bilateral and Multilateral



Editor: Lam Peng Er
Publisher: Routledge
Year of Publication: 2022

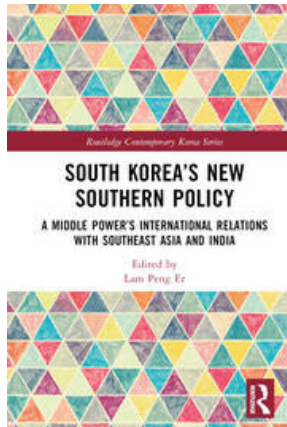
Description:

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

For more details, visit:

https://www.routledge.com/Contemporary-Korea-Southeast-Asian-Relations-Bilateral-and-Multilateral/Peng-Er/p/book/9781032111797?gclid=EAlaQobChMI-duGysbl_gIVxYBLBR019w6SEAAAYASAAEgIMS_D_BwE

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



Editor: Lam Peng Er
Publisher: Routledge
Year of Publication: 2023

Description:

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

For more details, visit:

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

CHRONOLOGY

ASEAN - Korea Relations

A Chronology of Key Events:

July 2023 to September 2023

Gordon Kang

S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University

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

July 2023

2nd	Republic of Korea (ROK) Marine Corps Commandant Lieutenant General Kim Gye-hwan visited Thailand and Indonesia as part of a 10-day trip to meet senior military leaders from these two countries. The discussions centred on fostering stability in the Indo-Pacific region and exploring avenues for bolstering cooperation. Of particular importance during these meetings were efforts to highlight the quality and effectiveness of South Korean weapons systems. Additionally, the trip included Kim's participation in the Pacific Amphibious Leaders Symposium held in Indonesia. During this event, he convened with Marine Corps officials from the United States, Britain and the Philippines to explore the possibilities of expanding joint exercises.
3rd	Seoul's arms procurement agency, the Defence Acquisition Programme Administration (DAPA), reported that Indonesia did not meet the deadline to submit a revised payment schedule for the joint KF-21 fighter development initiative with South Korea, raising concerns regarding Indonesia's commitment to the project. In May, DAPA Minister Eom Dong-hwan indicated that Indonesia was expected to present the new payment plan by the end of June, likely to address concerns regarding the outstanding financial contributions to the project. As a partner in the venture, Indonesia had initially agreed to cover approximately 20% of the project's total costs, which amounted to 8.8 trillion won (equivalent to US\$6.73 billion). Previously, Indonesia had also ceased making payments between January 2019 and November 2022..
4th	Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Political-Security Community Michael Tene received a courtesy call from the Ambassador of the ROK to ASEAN Lee Jang-keun. They discussed ASEAN-ROK relations and explored avenues to enhance their partnership and cooperation, particularly in preparation for the upcoming celebration of the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations in 2024.
4-7th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre (AKC) organised a seminar focused on the design industry and facilitated opportunities for B2B meetings in Melaka, Malaysia. The event was centred around the theme of advancing the design industry to promote a creative economy. The Malaysia Design Council and Office of the Melaka State Secretary collaborated with the AKC for this initiative. The seminar brought together representatives from both government agencies and the private sector within the design industry to create a platform for investment and market research missions.
4th	SK Bioscience Co, the pharmaceutical subsidiary of South Korea's SK Group, and the Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (GPO) of Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). SK Bioscience would assist Thailand in preparing for potential pandemics by developing a domestically produced vaccine. The initial step involved SK Bioscience reaching a separate agreement to transfer its technology for SKYCellflu, a cell culture-based influenza vaccine, to GPO. GPO, in turn, would undertake the production of the vaccine and incorporate it into the country's vaccination programmes.
5th	The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) opened a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Support Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to assist Korean companies in enhancing their utilisation of the Korea-ASEAN FTA and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) for exports to Malaysia. It will serve as a platform for discussing challenges and delivering valuable insights into Malaysian customs regulations, practical application of the RCEP and FTA, as well as recommendations on FTA-related matters. Malaysia stands as the third-largest trading partner for Korea within ASEAN, following Vietnam and Singapore.

5th	The 12th Asia Business Summit, jointly organised by the Federation of Korean Industries and the Japan Business Federation, convened in Seoul to explore strategies for enhancing collaboration in supply chains and reinvigorating people-to-people interactions, and facilitated discussions amongst leaders of 13 business organisations from more than a dozen Asian countries. These organisations include the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Taiwan's Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce and the Confederation of Indian Industry. Business associations from Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Malaysia were also represented at the event.
5-8th	A delegation representing pharmaceutical companies from the ROK visited Vietnam to explore opportunities for strengthening business partnerships, following a State visit to Vietnam by ROK's President Yoon Suk Yeol in late June and a plan approved then to implement the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries and expand bilateral cooperation in the biopharmaceutical sector. On 6 July, the Korea Pharmaceutical and Bio-Pharma Manufacturers Association, ROK's Ministry of Food and Drug Safety and Drug Administration of Vietnam conducted a workshop on cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector. This event attracted the participation of approximately 100 experts and officials.
6th	LG Electronics Inc announced that it had established its first overseas research and development (R&D) laboratory dedicated to home entertainment products in Indonesia. This move was part of its efforts to expedite its expansion into the Southeast Asian TV market. The R&D lab covers an area of 40,000 sq ft in Cibitung, West Java. It is strategically located in proximity to LG's existing TV manufacturing facilities in the same city, which acted as the production centre for the Asian market. Additionally, it was only 40 km away from LG's sales office in the capital city of Jakarta. LG anticipates that the regional R&D lab would enable the company to have a "local one-stop system for seamless business operations", from product development to the delivery of products to end-users.
10th	Singapore Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Development Sim Ann received a delegation from the 13th ROK Director-Generals' Visit Programme.
10th	The fourth round of official negotiations for the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) took place in South Korea's southeastern port city of Busan over a six-day period. Approximately 650 officials from the 14-member nations convened to work on defining details related to trade, establishing a clean economy and promoting a fair economy, which are three of the framework's four key pillars, as reported by MOTIE. In a previous meeting held in May in Detroit, member nations had reached an agreement on the pillar concerning supply chain resilience. This marked the first tangible progress since US President Joe Biden initiated the framework in 2022 to counter China's expanding influence in the region.
12th	Singapore strongly condemned the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) for launching an intercontinental ballistic missile on 12 July 2023.
13th	ASEAN's foreign ministers released a statement expressing grave concern over the recent launch of ballistic missile by the DPRK on 12 July 2023. They expressed deep dismay at this action, particularly as it occurred during the 56th ASEAN Ministerial Meetings/Post Ministerial Conference Meetings and other ASEAN-led meetings.
13th	The 24th ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3: ASEAN+Korea, Japan and China) Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Jakarta, Indonesia. The meeting revolved around the theme of "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth", with discussions on regional stability covering the Korean Peninsula and Myanmar. Foreign ministers agreed to enhance ASEAN+3 cooperation for post-COVID-19 sustainable development and economic growth. Amongst other matters, Foreign Minister Park Jin expressed deep concern over the Myanmar situation and pledged \$5.3 million in humanitarian aid. To strengthen resilience, South Korea committed to donating 4,500 tons of rice to the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve and providing health support to ASEAN countries through training programmes and international projects on K-health.
13th	The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference with the ROK took place in Jakarta. The conference assessed past ASEAN-ROK collaboration and explored future directions for growth. ASEAN expressed appreciation for ROK's backing of the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative to enhance core area cooperation. Additionally, discussions encompassed shared regional and international concerns.
14th	The 12th East Asia Summit (EAS) Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Jakarta. Foreign Minister Park underlined the Korean government's commitment to uphold a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region, emphasising support for ASEAN's pivotal role in regional strategic cooperation. He pledged active participation in international efforts to restore peace and provide humanitarian assistance in Ukraine. On the South China Sea, participants stressed that destabilising actions in the area threaten global trade routes, commerce and navigation, and hinder regional prosperity. They emphasised adherence to international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Park highlighted the importance of peace and stability in the South China Sea for regional and global economic recovery, expressing Korea's commitment to cooperate in establishing freedom of navigation and overflight based on a rules-based order and international law, including UNCLOS. On Myanmar, Park expressed apprehension about the worsening situation and called for substantial progress in implementing ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus for resolving the Myanmar issue. He reiterated Korea's commitment to support the people of Myanmar and refugees.

14th	The inauguration of the Samar Pacific Coastal Road (SPCR) project phase 1 in Northern Samar, overseen by President Ferdinand R Marcos, Jr, marked its completion after five years of construction. The project received funding from the ROK through the Export-Import Bank of Korea and consists of a PHP1.12 billion SPCR project phase 1 featuring an 11.6 km concrete road stretch with three bridges. President Marcos expressed optimism that the project would drive development in Northern Samar's agricultural sector and emphasised that infrastructure development is a key priority in enhancing Philippine-Korean bilateral relations. Besides the SPCR, the ROK is financing 21 other projects in the Philippines; both nations are eager to pursue further collaboration and flagship projects.
14th	The 30th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Jakarta, Indonesia. The meeting discussed and reaffirmed the ARF's crucial role in fostering mutual trust and dialogue in the region over its 30-year history. Participants also engaged in discussions on various regional and global issues, including those related to the Korean Peninsula, Ukraine, South China Sea and Myanmar, and reviewed activities of the current inter-sessional year (2022-2023).
17th	Senior officials from South Korea and Thailand, including ROK Deputy Trade Minister Jeong Dae-jin and Nattapol Rangsitpol, the permanent secretary of Thailand's industry ministry, held a meeting to explore opportunities to enhance bilateral collaboration in electric vehicles (EVs) and other emerging industries. The South Korean delegation sought Thailand's support for South Korean companies seeking to establish a presence in the Southeast Asian nation in the growing EV sector. Conversely, the Thai delegation expressed interest in Seoul's industry policies and expressed hope for increased cooperation in the automotive and advanced industry sectors between the two countries.
18th	Philippine Ambassador to Korea Theresa Dizon-De Vega and Samsung Electronics Executive Vice President for Global Public Affairs Kim Won-kyong held a meeting at the Philippine Embassy in Seoul. Kim called on Ambassador Vega to discuss future business and investment opportunities of Samsung Electronics in the Philippines.
18th	In a collaborative effort, South Korea's customs agency, the Korea Customs Service and its Thai counterpart conducted a joint operation between March and June to combat drug smuggling. It resulted in the confiscation of 72 kg of illegal drugs, including 47 kg of yaba (a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine), 12 kg of meth and various other drugs.
18th-26th	The ASEAN-Korea Centre conducted the '2023 ASEAN-Korea Youth Network Workshop' in Seoul and Danang. This workshop brought together 48 university students from 10 ASEAN nations and Korea, focusing on the theme 'Youth Shaping the Future: Building Enhanced Perceptions among Youths and Innovating Changes in Tourism.' The event featured activities such as expert lectures on ASEAN-Korea relations, mutual perceptions and sustainable tourism. Participants also went on site visits, engaged in team assignments, and enjoyed cultural experiences, fostering deeper understanding and friendships between ASEAN and Korean youth. The Korean programme was co-hosted by the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, while the Vietnam programme was co-hosted by Duy Tan University.
18-19th	The fourth joint committee meeting of the RCEP was held in Surabaya, Indonesia involving around 80 officials from 15 member nations. The discussions centred on setting up the RCEP secretariat, firming up the overall management and reviewing their agreed-upon rules regarding trade, investment, business opportunities and supply chain cooperation. Officials also explored the possibility of Sri Lanka joining the trade pact.
20th	ROK Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun convened a roundtable meeting with ambassadors from seven countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Bangladesh in Seoul, to discuss expanding collaborative projects for more effective attainment of their nations' respective zero-emission goals. Ahn emphasised the importance of strengthening bilateral partnerships and committed to providing support for their climate change policies and capabilities.
21st	South Korea's industry ministry convened an inaugural meeting attended by trade officials from the Vietnamese Embassy in Seoul to discuss the implementation of over 100 MOUs signed between the two countries' government organisations and private firms following a summit between Presidents Yoon Suk Yeol and Vo Van Thuong in June. In doing so South Korea and Vietnam have established trade promotion task forces to aid in realising their objective of doubling bilateral trade to \$150 billion by 2030. A ministerial meeting is planned later in the year to deepen industry ties and boost trade. These task forces, known as "Korea Plus in Vietnam" and "Vietnam Plus in Korea", will facilitate trade and industry information exchange, support exporters and explore business prospects.
25th	POSCO International Corp announced that it had signed a production sharing contract (PSC) with the Indonesian government and PT Pertamina Hulu Energi (PHE), the state-owned oil company, to explore and extract oil and gas in Indonesia. The PSC granted POSCO International the rights to explore the Bunga gas block off eastern Java Island for six years and develop and produce oil and gas there for 30 years. The sharing ratio for the Bunga project was established at 60:40 for oil and 55:44 for gas between the Indonesian government and the two companies, with POSCO International and PHE each holding a 50:50 stake in the project. POSCO International has been involved in gas exploration projects in Myanmar, Australia and Malaysia.

26th	Shehzad Traders, a Singaporean company dealing with skincare products and toiletries, was fined S\$10,000 for the unlawful supply of 500 bottles of perfume worth \$2,950 to North Korea, in violation of United Nations sanctions prohibiting the supply of luxury items to North Korean entities in Singapore. The company was convicted under the UN (Sanctions-Democratic People's Republic of Korea) Regulations 2010.
31st	An MOU was signed between the National Institute of Environmental Research of the ROK and the Singapore Environmental Agency to facilitate the sharing of satellite observations related to air quality and foster collaborative research focused on the practical applications of this data in addressing environmental concerns and pollution issues, including matters such as climate change and transboundary air pollution.

August 2023

3rd	During a meeting with senior officials from the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia, the visiting Korea Overseas Agro-Resourced Association delegation, led by project manager Dr Heo Jang, expressed their commitment to enhancing Cambodia's cashew industry. The Korea Overseas Agro-Industrial Resources Association of Korea proposed exploring the establishment of a cashew processing plant through a South Korean government official development assistance project. This initiative aims to increase the added value of Cambodian cashews for global export. The Cambodian Ministry of Commerce, represented by Secretary of State Reach Ra, welcomed this initiative, aligning with the National Cashew Policy 2022-2027.
4th	The Philippines and South Korea collaborated to enhance the Philippines' air quality monitoring and policymaking capacity. The Philippine Space Agency announced a partnership with the Korea International Cooperation Agency for the Pan-Asia Partnership for Geospatial Air Pollution Information and the Pandora Asia Network (PAGAPI-PAN) project. This initiative involves technology transfer, data sharing and capacity building for air pollution monitoring using data from the Geostationary Environment Monitoring Spectrometer (GEMS) aboard Korea's GEO-KOMPSAT-2B satellite, in combination with ground-based remote sensing instruments called Pandora. GEMS is known as the world's first geostationary satellite sensor for air quality monitoring, offering hourly air pollution monitoring across nearly 20 Asian countries, including the Philippines. PAGAPI-PAN aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of air quality in the Philippines by merging satellite and ground measurements.
4th	South Korea's Marine Conservation Division of the South Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries pledged grants amounting to US\$9 million for the Philippines and Timor-Leste in addressing the issue of marine plastic pollution. This project is to be carried out in coastal communities in Bulan, Sorsogon; Daanbantayan, Cebu; Calbayog city, Samar; Dipolog city, Zamboanga del Norte; Puerto Princesa, Palawan; and Tandag city, Surigao del Sur and includes four additional coastal communities in Timor-Leste. The "Reducing Marine Plastics in the East Asian Seas Region" initiative spans six years and focuses on improving marine plastics management through science-based governance, innovative solutions for a circular economy, regular beach monitoring, training and community awareness campaigns. The initiative's aim is to strengthen the capacity to combat marine debris and plastic pollution, allowing the sharing of experiences and best practices from South Korea's marine plastic waste management policies and recycling technologies.
4th	Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Phan Tam and ROK's Deputy Minister of Science and ICT Park Yun-kyu held an online meeting to discuss enhancing collaboration in information technology between the two nations. This meeting stemmed from negotiations in the digital export promotion group targeting the ASEAN market, following previous discussions between the deputy ministers on 9 June in Hanoi. Key topics during the online meeting included streamlining licensing processes for South Korea's exports of cybersecurity equipment to Vietnam, ROK-ASEAN digital cooperation and knowledge sharing of the Good Software certification system's setup and operation. Both sides emphasised expanding exchanges and cooperation in the field, with plans to attend events such as the "Vietnam International Digital Week 2023" in Hanoi and "World IT Show 2024" in Seoul.
7th	In a meeting at the ASEAN Secretariat, Secretary-General of ASEAN Dr Kao Kim Hourn and ROK Ambassador to ASEAN Lee Jang-keun discussed preparations for the forthcoming 24th ASEAN-ROK Summit scheduled for September 2023 in Jakarta. They also explored avenues to enhance cooperation, particularly in light of the 35th Anniversary of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations in 2024.
8th	ROK's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy and Laos' Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment held discussions on measures to mitigate greenhouse gases (GHG) in industrial and energy sectors at KOTRA in Seoul. The meeting involved representatives from KOTRA, the Korea Energy Agency and officials from various ministries within Laos. It aimed to strengthen the partnership for greenhouse gas mitigation between South Korea and Laos as part of Laos' efforts to promote green growth policies and sustainable power development. The Korean delegation proposed signing cooperation MOUs and pursuing pilot projects, which the Lao delegation agreed to, emphasising the importance of GHG mitigation in expanding bilateral cooperation and requesting Korea's assistance in strengthening their GHG mitigation system and capacity.

8th	An exchange programme brought together young people from the ROK and Vietnam in Ha Nam province. The event aimed to foster mutual understanding, cooperation and friendship between the two countries and strengthening their bilateral relationship. Activities included cultural and musical performances, visits to educational facilities, exploration of smart classrooms and creative clubs at Bien Hoa High School for the Gifted, and games to learn about Vietnamese culture, traditional festivals and notable destinations. The Korean delegation also visited local tourist sites and the Korean-invested KMW's factory, who are a member of the Korean Business Association and located in Dong Van industrial park.
9th	South Korea clarified that its arms sales ban to Myanmar remains in effect, despite inviting an envoy appointed by Myanmar's military rulers to an event promoting weapon sales. In May, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar Thomas Andrews expressed "extreme concern" over the attendance of Myanmar Ambassador Thant Sin at the South Korean Foreign Ministry's event. He argued that it legitimised the junta and raised doubts about South Korea's arms sales ban.
11th	South Korea's Hanwha Corp and the Netherlands-based Shell Gas and Power Developments BV, alongside Korea National Oil Co and Air Liquide Korea, have joined the Shepherd carbon capture and storage (CCS) project in Malaysia, as confirmed by SK Innovation Co. This project was initiated in August 2022 with participation from various South Korean companies, such as SK Energy Co, SK Earthon Co, Samsung Engineering Co, Samsung Heavy Industries Co and Lotte Chemical Corp, and Malaysia's state-run oil company Petronas. The project's goal is to capture carbon dioxide emissions from South Korean industrial sites, transport them to local carbon capture plants and subsequently store or sequester them in Malaysia. As new participants joined, the MOU was renewed. The companies have provisionally chosen locations for local capture plants and storage sites; the feasibility study is in progress to expedite the process.
15th-16th	ROK's Deputy Minister for the Energy Industry Cheon Young-gil led the Korean delegation in the 13th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Energy Ministerial Meeting, which took place in Seattle, the United States. This meeting marked the end of an eight-year gap since the previous APEC energy ministerial meeting. The meeting included representatives from 21 economies, including Korea, the United States, Canada, Japan, China, Russia, Taiwan, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia. They gathered to discuss expanding decarbonisation through nuclear energy, hydrogen and renewables, reducing methane emissions from fossil fuels and achieving an equitable energy transition.
16th	The ROK Navy began its participation in an annual multinational humanitarian assistance exercise in the Indo-Pacific, starting on 9 August and concluding on 21 November. Their Cheonjabong landing ship and 180 personnel, including Marines, were scheduled to parts of the exercise in the Philippines and Malaysia from 21 August to 16 September. South Korea, which has mostly despatched medical staff to the exercise since 2007, included a warship, engineering personnel and civilian experts this year to enhance their disaster response and humanitarian aid capabilities. Activities in the Philippines will involve constructing a local school and practising patient care and response to infectious animal diseases. In Malaysia, activities include setting up a field hospital, providing for disaster response and treating combat casualties, along with participating in a local school repair project.
16th	The Philippine Embassy in Seoul hosted a business mission from the Philippine Korea Economic Council (PHILKOREC) at the Sentro Rizal Hall. Led by PHILKOREC Chairman Robert Yupangco, the 42-member delegation included local government unit investment officers, entrepreneurs and professionals from various sectors such as food, franchising, pharmaceutical, health care, education, real estate, construction, cosmetics and financial services. The Philippine Embassy, along with the Philippine Trade and Investment Centre-Seoul, organised various business activities for the delegation, including 135 B2B meetings with 34 Korean companies and site visits to locations related to cosmetics, solar panel manufacturing, AI applications in health care and airport security technology.
17th	Deputy Minister of National Defence Senior Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Chien hosted a reception in Hanoi for Colonel Kim Myong Chol, defence attaché of the DPRK in Vietnam. During the meeting, Chien reiterated the significance of the traditional friendship between Vietnam and the DPRK, emphasising that the robust cooperation between the two countries laid the foundation for the expansion of bilateral defence cooperation. He praised the positive development of defence cooperation, even amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Chien commended the efforts of the DPRK officer in promoting cooperation between the two countries' armies and expressed his confidence in Kim's continued contributions to strengthening relations between the two nations and militaries. They discussed various areas of cooperation, including facilitating delegation exchanges, implementing agreements, sharing political experience and expanding cooperation in training, culture, sports and military medicine.

22nd	The 20th AEM-ROK Consultation was held and co-chaired by HE Dr Jerry Sambuaga, vice minister of trade, Republic of Indonesia. HE Dukgeun Ahn, minister for trade, ROK, was joined by HE Filipus Nino Pereira, minister of commerce and industry, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, as an observer. The meeting acknowledged the substantial growth in two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and ROK in 2022, which had tripled since the ASEAN-Korea Trade in Goods Agreement became effective in 2007. Trade reached US\$222.8 billion in 2022, marking a 17.4% increase from the previous year. ROK's foreign direct investment (FDI) in ASEAN in 2022 reached US\$12.7 billion, up by 25.5% from 2021, strengthening ROK's position as ASEAN's fifth-largest trade partner and sixth-largest source of FDI among ASEAN Dialogue Partners in 2022.
22nd	The Fourth ASEAN Plus Republic of Korea Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime Consultation was held in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia co-chaired by Vietnam and the ROK. The meeting acknowledged the results of the 16th ASEAN Plus ROK Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (16th SOMTC + ROK) Consultation held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 22 June 2023. This included the progress in implementing the SOMTC-ROK Work Plan for Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Transnational Crime (2019-2023) and the decision to extend the Work Plan's implementation until 2025. The participants expressed their anticipation for the plan's successful execution in the upcoming two years.
22nd	Cambodia and the ROK signed an MOU titled "Strengthening Traffic Safety and Improving Safety Equipment in School Areas in Cambodia". The MOU aims to contribute to the reduction of traffic accidents involving children and lay the groundwork for preparing a project proposal to enhance traffic safety and safety facilities in Cambodian schools and seek support from the Korean government. The project's focus encompassed children's training, raising awareness of traffic safety, establishing a traffic safety education centre, creating Safe School Zones and forming volunteer teams to aid in road safety efforts.
23rd	The ASEAN-Korea Centre organised the "Seminar on ASEAN-Korea Tourism 2023" with the theme 'Meeting the Locals towards a Sustainable ASEAN-Korea Tourism' at the Westin Josun Hotel in Seoul. The event is intended to address the changing dynamics of tourism with a growing interest in unique and authentic local experiences, and featured professionals from both the public and private sectors who shared their on-the-ground experiences in developing local tourism policies, best practices and presented a showcase of "50 must-visit local tourism destinations in ASEAN".
23rd-25th	The Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association and Korea Federation of Textile Industries (KOFOTI) signed an MOU to enhance bilateral cooperation. The signing ceremony took place during the "Preview in Seoul 2023" textile exhibition held in Seoul from 23 to 25 August. During the ceremony, KOFOTI Chairman Choi Byung-oh emphasised the strong partnership between South Korea and Vietnam in textile production, processing and export over the past three decades. With the signing of the MOU, both parties aim to further strengthen the strategic partnership in the textile and fashion industries, focusing on sustainable development, digital transformation and supply chains.
25th	E-Mart24 Inc, a major South Korean convenience store chain, signed an MOU with a South Korean real estate service company, Hanlim Architecture Group and a Cambodian food and beverage group, Saisons Brother Holding Co to enter the Cambodian market. The MOU marks the initiation of the first South Korean convenience store brand to establish a presence in Cambodia. A joint venture is planned between Hanlim and Saisons to later formalise a contract with E-Mart24 for the convenience store business. E-Mart24's plan involves opening its first store in Cambodia in the first half of the following year and gradually expanding to 100 convenience stores by 2028. Cambodia becomes the third country that E-Mart24 has entered, following Malaysia and Singapore, where there are 39 and three E-Mart24 stores, respectively.
28th	South Korea signed an agreement with Cambodia to export premium Korean beef, known as 'Hanwoo' to Cambodia, following eight years of quarantine negotiations. South Korea aims to export 2,000 tons of premium beef valued at \$100 million over the next five years. In separate instances, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and Agriculture Minister Dith Tinamet met visiting South Korean Agriculture Minister Chung Hwang-keun to discuss opportunities for expanding bilateral relations, particularly in the agricultural sector and related technologies.

September 2023

1st-10th	The Vietnam-Korea trade promotion week took place in the northern port city of Hai Phong to commemorate the 31st anniversary of Vietnam-ROK diplomatic ties. The event aimed to strengthen the linkages between trade and investment promotion activities, foster cultural exchange and understanding between the two countries, and enhance the strategic cooperative partnership between Vietnam and the ROK, with a specific focus on Hai Phong. The event featured nearly 100 booths, including 16 showcasing Vietnamese and Korean products and 72 presenting Vietnamese and Korean cuisines, specialties and beverages. Interactive zones for all age groups and cultural activities were also part of the week's activities.
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6th	The 24th ASEAN-ROK Summit took place in Jakarta, Indonesia. President Joko Widodo of Indonesia chaired the summit, attended by ASEAN member states, President Yoon Suk Yeol of the ROK and the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste as an observer. The summit yielded a Joint Statement on Cooperation on the AOIP and reviewed ASEAN-ROK cooperation. The joint statement is to bolster ASEAN-ROK cooperation in line with the AOIP's four areas. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen their partnership and cooperation, with consideration for the 35th Anniversary of Dialogue Relations in 2024. The leaders also discussed regional and international matters of common interest and concern.
6th	The 26th ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit was convened in Jakarta, presided by President Joko Widodo of Indonesia. Attending were ASEAN member states, China, Japan and the ROK, and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste as observer. Also in attendance were the secretary-general of ASEAN, director of ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office and secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat. During the summit, participants acknowledged the progress achieved in APT cooperation over previous years and discussed its future direction. A commitment to further strengthen the APT process was affirmed, recognising its vital role in regional community-building, as well as in promoting peace, stability and security in the East Asian region, with ASEAN as the driving force. They emphasised the complementary nature of the APT with other ASEAN-led mechanisms and frameworks and its significance in realising various regional initiatives.
6th	President Yoon Suk Yeol visited the ASEAN-Korea AI Youth FESTA at the Indonesian telecommunications firm Telkommet, meeting young individuals from South Korea and ASEAN. President Yoon expressed his commitment to endorsing creative concepts and emphasised South Korea's initiatives to foster unity with ASEAN through the Korea-ASEAN Digital Innovation Flagship project. This project aims to reduce digital disparity and support the economic development of ASEAN countries.
6th-9th	Speaker of ROK National Assembly Kim Jin-pyo led a delegation on a four-day visit to Cambodia. During his visit, he met Prime Minister Hun Manet, Acting Head of State Say Chhum and former Prime Minister and current President of the Supreme Privy Council to King Hun Sen. He also held a bilateral meeting with National Assembly President Khuon Sodary. Speaker Kim reinforced South Korea's commitment to supporting Cambodia's development strategies, including those related to agriculture, technology, carbon neutrality and tourism. Kim stated that South Korea would ensure the welfare of Cambodian workers in South Korea and enhance bilateral military cooperation, cultural exchanges and economic partnerships. During the visit, Prime Minister Hun Manet expressed gratitude for South Korea's continued support and proposed expanding military, economic and people-to-people cooperation. He also discussed trade agreements, vocational training and support for Cambodia's agriculture and green economy.
7th	Kouch Chamroeun, governor of Preah Sihanouk province, hosted a delegation from a plastic waste recycling firm led by Kim Sang Young, governor of Dehan Cooperate Korea. They held a presentation at Sihanoukville Provincial Hall with the aim of setting up a plastic waste processing plant in Preah Sihanouk province.
7th	An MOU was signed between PT Indo Raya Tenaga, owner and operator of the Java 9 and 10 power plant, and Doosan Enerbility, witnessed by the governments of both Indonesia and South Korea during the ASEAN Business Roundtable Meeting. The Java 9 and 10 Ultra Selective Catalytic Reduction power plant is the first hybrid power plant to incorporate green ammonia and green hydrogen in its production process. This development aligns with the net-zero emission goals of Indonesia and South Korea.
7th	Philippine President Ferdinand R Marcos Jr and ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol presided over the signing of the PH-ROK Free Trade Agreement by Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo Pascual and Trade Minister Ahn Duk Geun on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits in Jakarta, Indonesia and the 24th ASEAN-Korea Summit. Covering 91% of the ASEAN market, this is South Korea's fifth bilateral FTA with an ASEAN member following agreements with Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia. The agreement stipulated the removal of the 5% tariff on South Korean cars upon FTA implementation, with the phased elimination of tariffs on car parts within five years. It also addressed tariffs on electric and hybrid vehicles, which would be removed within five years.
7th	The 18th East Asia Summit (EAS) was held in Jakarta, Indonesia with HE Joko Widodo, president of Indonesia, presiding. The event included ASEAN member states, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, ROK, Russia and the United States, along with the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste as an observer. The secretary-general of ASEAN was also present. There were also separate bilateral meetings held between President Yoon Suk Yeol and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and Laotian Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone. Notably, this marked President Yoon's first meeting with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, who assumed office in August 2023.

7th	South Korea and Indonesia signed 14 initial agreements and two contracts during a business roundtable in Jakarta to enhance cooperation in nuclear power generation, mobility, major minerals and several other industrial sectors. Among the agreements, the nuclear power associations of both nations signed an MOU focused on exchanging information about nuclear power generation and fostering talent, with a particular emphasis on small modular reactors. In the mobility sector, two MOUs were signed to improve operation systems and solutions. Other agreements targeted key minerals, electricity, clean energy, machinery, healthcare industries, among others.
7th-9th	The Vietnam–ROK Festival commenced in the central beach city of Da Nang, featuring various cultural, culinary and entertainment activities over three days. These activities included traditional costume performances, arts, dances and folk games.
8th	CelcomDigi Bhd and South Korean technology company VIRNECT signed an MOU for the development and commercialisation of industrial extended reality solutions in Malaysia. The collaboration focused on creating experiential learning and education using the metaverse for various Malaysian universities. This MOU involves the co-creation of industrial virtual learning programmes utilising metaverse and artificial intelligence-based solutions. The agreement was signed by CelcomDigi's CEO Idham and VIRNECT's CEO Tim Ha in the presence of Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil during the GSMA Mobile 360 APAC conference.
8th	South Korea's MOTIE and Indonesia's economic ministry signed an MOU to strengthen collaboration in electric-powered vehicles, encompassing EVs and hydrogen vehicles, infrastructure, R&D, talent development and policy measures. The two countries agreed to support the Korea-Indonesia e-mobility cooperation centre, which was established as part of South Korea's official development assistance programme. They also signed a separate MOU to promote technology and personnel exchanges, and investment in future industries like biotechnology, renewable energy and the digital economy.
8th	ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol and Indonesian President Joko Widodo strengthened their countries' security and economic partnership during a bilateral summit in Jakarta. The leaders agreed to enhance arms cooperation and confirmed their commitment to a joint project for developing KF-21 fighter jets, which would make Indonesia South Korea's largest arms buyer among ASEAN countries. They aimed to expand trade and investment, especially in Indonesia's EV and battery industries, and promote South Korean halal food exports. Both nations committed to cooperating in infrastructure development, such as carbon-neutral purification plants and water systems, in line with Indonesia's capital city relocation plans. People-to-people exchanges and regional and international cooperation were also emphasised. South Korea also sought Indonesia's support for hosting the 2030 World Expo in Busan.
9th	ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol participated in two sessions of the G20 summit, including one on climate change and the environment. During this session, Yoon presented South Korea's strategies to address climate change.
9th-10th	The 2023 G20 New Delhi summit marked the 18th G20 meeting at the Bharat Mandapam International Exhibition-Convention Centre in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. It was the first G20 summit hosted in India, with the ROK and Indonesia in attendance. President Joko Widodo chaired the First MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Türkiye and Australia) Leaders' Gathering on 9 September. During this meeting, President Yoon Suk Yeol proposed cooperation in establishing digital norms for the digital transformation process and promoting exchanges among future generations. President Jokowi emphasised that MIKTA countries should support inclusive economic recovery through digital transformation, following the example set by ASEAN. He noted that ASEAN has a Digital Economic Framework Agreement (DEFA) capable of expanding the digital economy to US\$2 trillion by 2030.
10th	The protocol amending the Vietnam-ROK agreement on customs cooperation and mutual assistance became effective on this day. This document, which was signed in December 2022, serves as a legal framework for extending customs clearance benefits, simplifying procedures for Korean companies exporting goods to Vietnam, as reported by the ROK's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Originally established in 1995, the Vietnam-ROK customs cooperation agreement was updated in 2018 to better adapt to evolving trade dynamics and boost support for exporters and importers. The ROK's foreign ministry anticipates that the implementation of this protocol will contribute to trade recovery with Vietnam, a significant trading partner, and enhance the competitive edge of Korean businesses involved in import and export.
10th	Concluding his trip to India, ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol visited the Raj Ghat memorial, a tribute to the Indian anti-colonial nationalist Mahatma Gandhi; he subsequently took part in the third G20 session, focusing on the theme "One Future". During this session, discussions revolved around South Korea's potential contributions to the establishment of a free, peaceful and prosperous future.

11th	North Korea and Cambodia committed to enhancing bilateral friendly and cooperative ties across various sectors under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Manet at the reception marking the 75th Founding Anniversary of the DPRK at Phnom Penh's Hotel Cambodiana. The event was attended by members of Cambodia's royal family, senior government officials, diplomats and political party leaders. It was also graced by various senior government figures, including the Minister of Information Neth Pheaktra, President of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee and Senior Minister Keo Remy, Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Unit and Senior Minister Om Yenteng and Minister of Inspection Huot Hak. The diplomatic community was represented by ambassadors from Russia, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cuba, among others. North Korea affirmed its commitment to advancing cooperative relations with Cambodia under Prime Minister Hun Manet's leadership.
11th	KT Corp, a major South Korean telecom operator, announced that it had signed an MOU with Singapore Post (SingPost), a Singaporean postal service company, to collaborate on a novel digital logistics business model. Under this MOU, KT and SingPost will conduct a pilot programme that focuses on digital logistics transportation optimisation in seven Singaporean districts. This initiative will make use of KT's artificial intelligence delivery platform, LISFO. The partnership includes route optimisation and unloading processes from the planning stage, incorporating KT's AI-based predictive solutions that are customised to the local logistics context in Singapore. Through the implementation of LISFO, SingPost is expected to achieve a 27% reduction in total mileage and a 15% decrease in the number of vehicles used.
11th	South Korea participated in the fifth round of negotiations for the US-led IPEF that took place in Thailand. The talks commenced in Bangkok for a week-long session; South Korea was represented by a delegation led by Deputy Minister for Trade Negotiations Roh Keon-ki, as confirmed by the ROK's MOTIE.
11th	KT&G Corp, South Korea's leading tobacco company, announced its plans to expand production facilities in Indonesia, targeting operations to commence by 2026. The company, which already has a tobacco manufacturing plant in Surabaya, intends to construct a new facility in Indonesia to serve as its primary "manufacturing base" in Southeast Asia for exporting products to neighbouring countries and beyond. The Indonesian government pledged full support and convenience for this investment project. Specifics regarding the scale of investment and other details have been put to a later date as decisions are subject to a board vote within the company.
12th	The 10th ROK - Vietnam Women's Forum, jointly organised by the Korean Women's Development Institute and the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU), was held in Seoul. VWU Vice President Ton Ngoc Hanh opened the event, highlighting the impressive progress in Vietnam-ROK relations and the substantial contributions made by women from both nations. She emphasised the significant growth in both the quantity and quality of cooperation between Vietnamese and Korean women. This year's forum centred on the theme of "Women, peace and security" that aligns with international priorities on the UN and governmental agendas, holding particular significance for both Vietnam and the ROK concerning traditional and non-traditional issues.
14th	Head of the Vietnamese National Assembly Standing Committee's Board for Deputy Affairs Nguyen Thi Thanh received a delegation from the National Assembly of the ROK who were visiting Vietnam to participate in the Ninth Global Conference for Young Parliamentarians on 15 September in Hanoi. Thanh, who is also vice chairwoman of the Party Central Committee's Organisation Commission and chairwoman of the Vietnam - ROK Parliamentary Friendship Group, expressed Vietnam's strong commitment to fostering friendly and cooperative relations with the ROK. During this meeting, Thanh encouraged the ROK's National Assembly to promote greater connections between Korean businesses and their Vietnamese counterparts.
14th	During the meeting with ROK Vice Minister of Environment Lim Sangjun, who was in Vietnam to attend the HCM City Economic Forum 2023, Vice Chairman of Vietnam's municipal People's Committee Bui Xuan Cuong extended a warm welcome to Korean businesses and investors, inviting them to explore, collaborate and invest in Ho Chi Minh city, particularly in the fields of green economy, wastewater treatment and waste management. He welcomed the ROK to leverage its expertise and collaborate with the city by transferring technology, providing training for the workforce and encouraging Korean companies to invest in these sectors. Lim affirmed the global importance of green growth and sustainable development and expressed the ROK's willingness to share its experiences and relevant policies. He revealed that numerous Korean businesses are interested in wastewater treatment projects in the city, particularly through public-private partnerships. In a separate meeting, Cuong discussed potential cooperation in wastewater treatment projects with a leader from the ROK's Samsung Engineering Co Ltd.

14th	MOTIE held an inaugural meeting of the “Vietnam-Korea Plus Joint Working Group” to explore ways to expedite the goal of achieving a US\$150 billion trade volume between Korea and Vietnam by 2030. This initiative builds upon the trade and investment MOU established during President Yoon Suk Yeol’s state visit to Vietnam in June. It involves the formation of specialised support teams named Vietnam Plus and Korea Plus, consisting of government authorities, trade delegates and trade facilitation entities from both countries. These teams will collaborate to enhance economic cooperation through working group meetings. The first meeting featured the participation of Kim Jong-cheol, director general of International Trade Relations at MOTIE, and Tran Quang Huy, director of the African, West and South Asian Markets Department at Vietnam’s Ministry of Industry and Trade, along with representatives from various organisations. The participants reviewed the current bilateral trade and investment, discussed the establishment of a critical minerals supply chain centre, examined follow-up measures to summit agreements and explored support measures for local enterprises facing challenges in investment and exports. They also exchanged thoughts on the future operational direction of the joint working group.
15th	The Green Digital Economy Platform (GDEP), led by HumanX, a global partnership dedicated to prioritising technology that enhances human well-being, was recently introduced to establish a crucial link between 62 million Indonesian farmers, Korean scientists and global investors. This platform aims to provide essential support to farmers, equipping them with advanced skills like meta farming and carbon trading, in line with both countries’ commitment to promoting sustainability in the digital economy. The platform’s official launch was endorsed by the Presidential Chief of Staff of Indonesia Dr Moeldoko. The GDEP introduced a “cross economy” model that goes beyond the traditional “circular economy” framework by capitalising on Korea’s technological advancements, Indonesia’s vast market and resources, and global R&D and investment. It is poised to drive transformative digital innovations in agritech, climate-tech and carbon trading; its impacts on the digital economy and sustainability will be monitored through the Digital-ESG Index led by the Taskforce on Digital-Related Financial Disclosure.
18th	According to the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the DPRK embassies in Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and Cambodia organised receptions to celebrate the 75th Founding Anniversary of the DPRK.
19th-26th	During the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Foreign Affairs Minister Park Jin attended the 24th MIKTA Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in New York on 23 September and addressed various issues. These discussions included follow-up actions following the MIKTA Leaders’ Gathering held during the G20 Summit and strategies for enhancing collaboration within multilateral and regional platforms. MIKTA, a consultative forum composing of Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Türkiye and Australia, was established in September 2013 during the 68th UN General Assembly and celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. Indonesia is serving as its chair for the term March 2023 to March 2024.
19th	The ROK Army conducted its annual international military logistics forum with participants from ASEAN and other nations to bolster defence collaboration. The three-day Korean ASEAN Plus International Forum on Logistics was held in Gyeryong, 142 kilometres south of Seoul, to discuss the enhancement of logistics support and international coordination in response to non-traditional threats. The forum assembled approximately 50 officials from 12 countries, including eight ASEAN member countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), as well as Australia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.
21st	Mediacorp’s content creator network, Bloomr.SG, signed an MOU with PressPlay from Taiwan and Treasure Hunter from South Korea to encourage cross-border talent exchanges and explore business prospects. These marked its first collaboration with regional counterparts and signified Mediacorp’s commitment to supporting content creators by providing them with broader exposure through international projects. Singaporean clients will also benefit from access to established creators from Taiwan and South Korea through these partnerships. The collaboration between Bloomr.SG and the two agencies will involve areas like co-producing content and sharing talent from a select group of content creators.
21st	Philippines Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z Duterte and South Korean Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Lee Ju-Ho held a bilateral meeting during the 2023 Global Education and Innovation Summit at the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Seoul’s Gangnam district to discuss potential collaboration in education, with a particular focus on leveraging digital technology for learning. Vice President Duterte expressed her eagerness to cooperate with the South Korean government in enhancing the Philippines’ basic education and underscored the significance of educational innovation, particularly on digital education.
22nd	Lotte Group Chairman Shin Dong-bin visited Vietnam to participate in the grand opening of Lotte Mall West Lake Hanoi, a colossal project with an investment of \$643 million, representing Lotte’s largest operational venture in Vietnam. Additionally, SK Group, another prominent South Korean conglomerate, received an investment registration certificate to allocate further capital to Vietnam. Through its subsidiary SKC, the group will invest \$500 million in a state-of-the-art biodegradable material factory in Hai Phong city, with construction scheduled to commence later this year and complete in the third quarter of 2024. CEO of SKC Park Won-cheol emphasised the company’s five-year investment track record of about \$3 billion in Vietnam; he expressed the intent to encourage more South Korean enterprises to invest in both Vietnam and Hai Phong specifically.

25th	South Korea's advanced materials manufacturer SK announced that a site for constructing a biodegradable plastics manufacturing plant has been identified in Hai Phong, Vietnam. In response to the escalating global drive to reduce plastic waste, the international market for bioplastics is anticipated to expand at an annual rate exceeding 20%. Moreover, SKC is planning to build a separate facility at the same location to produce an annual 36,000 tons of a biodegradable material named Limex. Hai Phong, Vietnam's foremost port city and a pivotal industrial centre with well-developed logistics infrastructure, was chosen for this venture. SKC, along with officials and senior executives from their joint venture Ecovance, visited Vietnam to participate in a ceremony marking the launch of the investment plan and to receive an investment registration certificate from the Vietnamese government, a requisite legal document for foreign investing companies. The factory is set to commence operations in 2025.
25th	MOTIE signed MOUs on four international projects aimed at reducing GHG at KOTRA. Minister for Trade Dukgeun Ahn and Vietnamese Ambassador to Korea Nguyen Vu Tung, alongside representatives from relevant affiliations, were present at the event. These international projects were designed to support facility investments of Korean companies striving to lower GHG emissions and achieving a 37.5-million-ton reduction in overseas activities, in line with nationally determined contributions. MOTIE selected four projects, which are expected to attract KRW27 billion in investments and reduce 10.3 million tons of GHG emissions during the project's lifespan. An approximate 260,000 tons of GHG will be mitigated overseas with the government's contribution of 5.9 billion won. Three of the four projects involve cooperation with Vietnam, while one involves cooperation with Uzbekistan.
27th	Glovax Lifescience Corp, a partnership between Glovax Biotech and Korean pharmaceutical company Eubiologics, commenced construction of the Philippines' first vaccine manufacturing facility at an investment of PHP7.5 billion. The groundbreaking ceremony for the facility took place in Taysan, Batangas. This project was facilitated through the Philippines-Korea Free Trade Agreement and specific health cooperation provisions in the FTA. The state-owned National Development Co was involved in the MOU for the vaccine manufacturing project.
28th	The Vietnam Tourism Association (VITA) and the Korea Tourism Organisation of the Republic of Korea signed an MOU in Hanoi to strengthen tourism cooperation. The agreement included provisions for sharing tourism-related information, promoting exchanges among businesses and jointly organising various promotional activities. VITA members would receive support in developing tours to South Korea, ensuring quality tourism programmes and safeguarding the rights and benefits of Vietnamese tourists in South Korea. It also aims to enhance service quality for Korean tourists visiting Vietnam.

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 Republic of Indonesia; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Laos; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; 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 Democratic People's Republic of Korea; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea; Channel News Asia; The Borneo Bulletin; Khmer Times; Phnom Penh Post; The Jakarta Post; The Laotian Times; The Star; The Myanmar Times; The Philippine Star; The Straits Times; Bangkok Post; Nhan Dan; Vietnam News Agency; Vietnam Plus; The Korean Central News Agency; NK News; NK Pro; Yonhap News Agency; and The Korea Times.