

KOREA NEWSLETTER

Vol 1 | Issue 4
October 2024

Contents

- South Korea's Growing Strategic Partnership in Indo-Pacific
- South Korea's New "Unification Doctrine" towards North Korea
- North Korea Promotes Regional Development
- Korean People Celebrate *Chuseok* Festival



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

South Korea's Growing Strategic Partnership in Indo-Pacific

South Korea has increased its cooperation with the Indo-Pacific Partners (IP4). IP4 consists of Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea. In September 2024, the Prime Minister of New Zealand Christopher Luxon visited Seoul and met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol. Both South Korea and New Zealand discussed on [wide range of issues](#) related to the Indo-Pacific region, and agreed to elevate their bilateral relations to that of a “comprehensive strategic partnership”. South Korea has also called upon to [increase solidarity](#) among the IP4 countries regarding cyber security. The outgoing Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida made a [farewell trip to South Korea](#) in September in an effort to strengthen the bilateral relations with Seoul. The South Korean President Yoon also congratulated the new Vietnamese President To Lam and [pledged to deepen](#) the “comprehensive strategic partnership” between the two nations. Also, in September, in an article published in *The Korea Times*, the Philippine Minister of Foreign Affairs, Enrique A. Manalo wrote about the significance of his country's [time-tested relationship](#) with South Korea based on peace and prosperity. It was reported that Germany's warship Baden-Wurtemberg and replenishment vessel Frankfurt am Main visited the South Korean port of Incheon during September 6-10, as part of Berlin's strategy of [“Indo-Pacific Deployment 2024”](#) and strengthen strategic relations with South Korea.

South Korea's New “Unification Doctrine” towards North Korea

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol announced a new [“unification doctrine”](#) on the Liberation Day (August 15, 2024) to reunify the Korean Peninsula. This strategy of Yoon's government is to [“reform”](#) North Korea and promote freedom and human rights in this isolated country. However, the South Korean Minister of Unification Kim Yung-ho categorically rejected any effort by South Korea to [absorb](#) North Korea. Following its goal to empower North Korean common people and elite, South Korean government under the leadership of Yoon appointed a North Korean defector Tae Yong-ho in a [higher administrative position](#) of South Korea. As part of its new reunification policy, the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC) of South Korea [invited experts](#) from the United States to Seoul in September. The newly appointed chief of the secretariat of PUAC, Tae Yong-ho said on September 4, 2024 that North Korea has not yet formalised its “two hostile states” policy with regards to [Pyongyang's relationship with Seoul](#). In another report in September, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon emphasised the significance of the [support of China and Japan](#) for Korean national reunification. However, the ex-South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his former Chief of Staff Im Jong-seok [criticised](#) the Yoon government's policy towards North Korea for different reasons.

North Korea Promotes Regional Development

The North Korean regime has increased its efforts for the development of various regions in the country. This effort of Pyongyang is to mitigate the rising regional disparities. The recent floods in the north-western regions of North Korea and devastations caused there have highlighted the regional disparities in the country. In September, it was reported in the South Korean media that the North Korean officials who were held [responsible for the destruction](#) caused by the recent floods in the provinces of Jagang and North Phyongan may be executed. As a result, around thirty government officials were reported to have been [probably executed](#) in North Korea. Also, in September 2024 the North Korean media reported that the country is giving due [attention to modernise](#) the cities and rural areas across North Korea and construct advanced health facilities, food grain management and bring scientific technology in the backward areas through the implementation of the “Regional Development 20×10 Policy”. Through this strategy, the aim of the North Korean regime is to achieve “[a balanced and simultaneous development](#)” of the entire country and build development projects in twenty cities and counties every year within the ten-year period. To boost regional development, North Korea has been developing [regional-industry factories](#) in various regions of the country. In this endeavour, the 124th regiments of the North Korean People’s Army (KPA) have been [put into action](#) to build these projects. As part of the regional development strategy, the North Korean officials are also giving emphasis on the increase in [production of the food grains](#) in regional areas.

Korean People Celebrate Chuseok Festival

The Korean people in the Korean Peninsula celebrated *Chuseok*, which is a traditional harvest festival of their nation during September 16-18, 2024. This festival period of Koreans includes ancestral worship, and get together of the family members and close relatives. However, the festivities during *Chuseok* also lead to [stressful situation](#), particularly for women due to increased household activities and preparations. Also, as a result of economic strain, people in South Korea found it [hard to buy](#) festival gift items this year. It was reported that the rising prices have [impacted the sales](#) of the gift items for *Chuseok* in September. Due to the festivities and to make more income, a large number of restaurants, food outlets and shops decided to [remain open](#) during the festival holiday period. Most of the emergency medical services [remained opened](#) during the festival as well. This year also people in South Korea visited their hometowns in large number, which also led to [traffic congestions](#) in highways. However, the rush for railway services during *Chuseok* was observed to be [low](#). On the other hand, airports in South Korea braced for [huge rush](#) during the holiday. It was reported that some of the opposition leaders in South Korea [rejected and returned](#) the gifts sent to them from President Yoon Suk Yeol due to their criticism of various policies of the Yoon’s administration. During the *Chuseok* festival President Yoon [met soldiers](#) of the 15th Infantry Division. In North Korea also celebration of national traditions and folk culture is given importance as part of the “[Korean-nation-first spirit](#)”. *Chuseok* was [celebrated](#) in North Korea on September 17.