

Price of eating out increases 8% on-year

ISSUE & DATA The price of popular dishes rose about 8 percent over a one-year period, the Korea Consumer Agency said.

Posted on the agency's price information site, the list of eight dishes measured between January of last and this year showed price increases for seven.

Gimbap, a rice roll with vegetables, cost an average 2,369 won (\$2.11), up 8.1 percent from a year ago. A bowl of naengmyeon, cold buckwheat noodles, was priced at an average of 8,846 won, up 8 percent, while bibimbap, rice mixed with vegetables, was sold at 8,731 won on average, a gain of 7.6 percent.

Increase in prices of popular dishes

(Unit: %) Source: Korea Consumer Agency/Yonhap



Graphic by Nam Kyung-don
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Modi's visit to S. Korea may boost defense ties

By Ram Garikipati

During his two-day state visit to South Korea, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi mostly concentrated on economic ties, but he also talked about defense ties that went under the radar while committing full support for the upcoming summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

India's security ties with South Korea have not gotten the attention needed, so The Korea Herald contacted a top security analyst to get facts and the on-ground situation.

"Economic engagement lies at the core of India-South Korea relations. The South Korean economic miracle was an inspiration for India as it began to liberalize its economy in the early 1990s. In fact, the first articulation of the idea of India's 'Look East' policy was made by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao during his 1993 visit to South Korea," Kalyanaraman Sankaran, research fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, which is India's premier think tank on security studies, told The Korea Herald.

Look East, while it was initially envisaged as a policy initiative, actually sought to deepen economic links with the dynamic economies of East and Southeast Asia and thereby further India's own economic development, he said.

"Only later the security and strategic aspects entered the picture. India is still in the early stages of becoming a factor in the strategic equation of the East Asian region. To put it another way, it has not yet become an actor in the international politics of Southeast Asia and East Asia."

He noted that while Modi has provided an impetus for Indian engagement with the countries of the region, and even renamed the Look East policy the "Act East" policy to provide a greater sense of purpose, India is unlikely to emerge as an actor in the region for another decade or two.

"This is a function of two main factors. One, the bulk of India's military energies are devoted to cater for the challenge posed by Pakistan and the possibility of a China-Pakistan joint challenge. In fact, India does not even have surplus military power to do anything other than adopt the defensive vis-a-vis China."

In other words, India has no excess military capacity to play any meaningful role in East Asia, he said.

Given this backdrop, high expectations about the prospects of defense cooperation between India and South Korea are not warranted. Defense contacts between the two countries began in the early years of this century in the form of joint naval exercises.

"But these were more in the nature of getting-to-know-each-other activities rather than mission-oriented maneuvers. The latter half of the 2000s also saw Kangnam Corp. nearly clinch a contract for supplying minesweepers to the Indian Navy, only for the entire acquisition process to be canceled because of allegations of corruption," he pointed out.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi poses for a photo after receiving the Seoul Peace Prize Award in recognition of his service to international cooperation, global growth and human development, at a Seoul hotel on Friday. Modi left Seoul on Friday after winding up his two-day state visit to Korea. Yonhap

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As the first decade of the 21st century progressed, several factors convinced India and South Korea to elevate their relationship to the status of a strategic partnership in 2010.

These included: India's emergence as an important economic actor and a geopolitical weight in the Asian balance of power; South Korea's growing dependence for its energy security on the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean; and the perception in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and the Great Recession that America — and the West at large — has entered its stage of decline even as China was rising to become Asia's dominant power.

"Defense cooperation received a fillip after the strategic partnership was declared during the visit of President Lee Myung-bak to India in January 2010. In September 2010, Defense Minister Antony visited South Korea and signed a MOU on defense cooperation, including in defense research and production," the scholar said.

India and South Korea signed a bilateral agreement on protecting classified information in 2014. Indian and South Korean defense ministers have since then exchanged visits — Kim Kwan-jin visited India in 2012, while Manohar Parrikar traveled in the other direction in 2015 and thereafter Arun Jaitley in 2017. There is regular dialogue at the levels of the defense secretary and secretary for defense production.

"When President Moon Jae-in visited India in 2018, he and Modi agreed to step up defense exchanges, training, and defense industrial cooperation especially defense shipbuilding," he noted.

The defense relationship is still in its initial stages of exploration. If there is one area of

strength that South Korea has, that lies in shipbuilding, India should forge linkages with the South Korean shipbuilding industry and seriously consider sourcing vessels such as minesweepers from South Korea, he said.

"The South Korean defense industry has been supplying a substantial portion of the military's requirements since at least the 1980s. In recent years, it has also emerged as an important secondary player in the international arms market. But it is yet to master the manufacture of front-line weapons and platforms, which is likely to limit the scope for defense trade between India and South Korea," Sankaran observed.

"There are no fundamental divergences in the national interests of India and South Korea. On the contrary, their security concerns converge with respect to the nuclear proliferation nexus between Pakistan and North Korea as well as China's extensive support for both these countries."

He added that China has long supported and provided cover for even the roguish actions of North Korea and Pakistan because it views North Korea as the lips that guard the Chinese teeth from the American military presence on the Korean Peninsula, and uses Pakistan as an all-weather ally to checkmate India — the only country in Asia that has the economic and military potential as well as civilizational heritage to resist the Chinese bid for hegemony.

"This convergence of interests forms a firm foundation on which to construct the India-South Korea defense and security relationship in the years to come."

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India toxic alcohol deaths jump to 133, police says

GUWAHATI, India (AFP) — At least 35 more workers have died in northeastern India after drinking toxic liquor, police said Sunday, taking the death toll from the latest mass alcohol poisoning beyond 130.

The deaths in Assam state came less than two weeks after tainted liquor killed about 100 people in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

In addition to the latest toll, at least 200 more people were still hospitalized across Assam.

"The death toll has reached 133 in Gola-ghat and Jorhat districts from the hooch tragedy," Mukesh Agarwala, additional director general of state police, told Agence France-Press on Sunday.

"A total of 10 people have been arrested. We have sent the samples of the liquor ... to a forensic laboratory. The report is awaited," he added.

Police said people started falling sick after consuming a batch of illegally produced liquor late Thursday.

The victims, who include many women, worked at local tea estates in the region.

Doctors said those rushed to hospital in a critical condition were suffering from severe vomiting, extreme chest pain and breathlessness.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has ordered an inquiry into the deaths.

Apart from the arrests, two excise department officials were suspended for failing to take adequate precautions over the sale of the alcohol.

Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma vowed those responsible for the tainted booze would be brought to justice.

Cheap, locally made liquor is common in parts of rural India and bootleggers often add methanol — a highly toxic form of alcohol sometimes used as an antifreeze — to their product to increase its strength.

If ingested in large quantities, methanol can cause blindness, liver damage and death.

Hundreds of mainly poor people die each year in the South Asian country from tainted liquor, which normally costs just a few US cents a bottle.

Of the estimated 5 billion liters of alcohol drunk every year in India, around 40 percent is illegally produced, according to the International Spirits and Wine Association of India.

Many Indian states have implemented or pushed for prohibition, which, according to critics, further increases the unregulated manufacture and sale of alcohol.

MWC 2019

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like, Korean telecom giants allowed a peak of their platforms incorporating the advanced network into everyday lives Sunday.

During MWC sessions, SK Telecom, KT and LG Uplus said they would demonstrate how the 5G network can transform business and leisure when the first 5G-based smartphones hit the market next month.

KT will demonstrate the extent to which seamless communication is possible regardless of distance. Using its remotely controlled blimp, called 5G Skyship, the company showed images sent in real time to Barcelona all the way from South Korea's southern port city of Busan.

As the 5G Skyship's high-definition camera is capable of delivering flawless images sent from halfway around the world, the company said the technology could be used in search-and-rescue missions in the event of natural disasters and other emergencies.

"Signals capable of controlling the blimp's camera are sent from Busan to Barcelona through international circuit lines. ... Visitors can control the blimp's movement (however) they see fit and enjoy the night scenery of Busan from Barcelona," said KT officials.

Meanwhile, KT's biggest rival, SK Telecom, unveiled the 5G Hyper Space platform to blur the line between the virtual and real world by allowing users to toggle back and forth between the two.

"Having copied the images of hotels and offices in the real world, those wearing the VR machine can hardly feel the difference in the virtual world," said an official from SKT. "In accordance with the commercial rollout of 5G, we will expand the service."

According to SK Telecom, users can visit a restaurant and see a hotel room via virtual reality goggles before making a reservation. Reservations made in the virtual world would be effective in the real world.

The two companies will also unveil a system for "smart factories" connected by the 5G network. By processing enormous volumes of data at hyper speeds, the system can reduce the amount of defective products and the risk of safety accidents, they said.

Korea's third-biggest mobile carrier, LG Uplus, revealed a service that allows consumers to enjoy sports events and music performances at advanced quality. The company said the network allows users to watch footage with minimum latency.

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UK ministers may break with May over Brexit

LONDON (AFP) — Three members of Prime Minister Theresa May's cabinet warned Saturday that Brexit must be delayed if she cannot persuade Parliament to back her EU divorce deal next week.

Business Minister Greg Clark, Work and Pensions Minister Amber Rudd and Justice Minister David Gauke wrote an article stating their opposition to leaving the European Union on March 29 with no deal.

May is currently scrambling to secure changes to the divorce text she struck with the bloc in November, hoping to win the support of members of Parliament who last month rejected the deal by a massive margin.

"If there is no breakthrough in the coming week, the balance of opinion in Parliament is clear — that it would be better to seek to ... delay our date of departure rather than crash out of the European Union on March 29," the ministers wrote in the Daily Mail newspaper.

They added, "Beyond the next few days, there simply will not be time to agree a deal and complete all the necessary legislation before March 29."

But they warned that leaving the EU with no deal would "severely" damage the economy, weaken national security and risk the breakup of the UK.

May was in Brussels this week for talks

with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, and will meet European Council President Donald Tusk on Sunday at an EU-Arab League summit in Egypt.

She has promised to update Parliament on her efforts Tuesday and either put the new deal to a fresh vote of MPs or allow them Wednesday to debate their own ideas for the way forward.

One of these is expected to be a plan to delay Brexit to avoid a "no deal" scenario.

The ministers warned their headline Brexit-supporting colleagues who continue to oppose May's Brexit deal that MPs will not allow Britain to leave the EU with no deal by default.



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May
AP-Yonhap