

# KOREA NEWSLETTER

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## South Korean President's Visit to Four Nations

The South Korean President Lee Jae Myung [visited](#) four countries, namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, South Africa and Turkey during November 17~26, 2025. During his visit to UAE, President Lee met UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and held [discussions](#) to enhance bilateral cooperation in the fields of energy, defence industry, artificial intelligence (AI) and space research. Both South Korea and UAE signed various agreements to deepen their strategic partnership. The second destination of President Lee's trip was to Egypt where he met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Reportedly, Egypt has emerged as an [importer](#) of South Korean defence equipment, such as K9 self-propelled howitzers from Hanwha Aerospace. The year 2025 also commemorates thirty years of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Seoul and Cairo. It was reported that President Lee Jae Myung aims to further enhance cultural exchanges between South Korea and Egypt. During his visit to South Africa, President Lee [attended](#) the G-20 summit in Johannesburg. On the margins of the G-20 summit, President Lee met with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and [discussed](#) ways to deepen collaboration in shipbuilding, AI and defence industry. In the final leg of his four-nation trip, President Lee reached Turkey and [met](#) Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to discuss measures to enhance bilateral cooperation in nuclear energy and defence

industry. President Lee returned to South Korea on November 26.

## South Korea's Relationship with China

South Korea was the venue for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit (October 31~November 1, 2025), which was attended by the Chinese President Xi Jinping. On the sidelines of the APEC summit, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung [met](#) with Xi Jinping and agreed to deepen economic cooperation and work for mutual interests between the two countries. The talks between the two leaders continued for 97 minutes and the issues to further promote their "reciprocal cooperation" were discussed between them. President Lee Jae Myung also sought the support of Beijing in resuming talks between South and North Korea. Notably, South Korea-China diplomatic relations were established in 1992 and this visit to South Korea by Xi happened after a gap of almost eleven years. According to another news report in the South Korean media in November, a parade by some Chinese tourists wearing "[military-style](#)" uniforms during the International Walking Exchange event on October 31, 2025 in Seoul sparked controversy. Reportedly, some Chinese tourists visiting South Korea have created controversies in the past by planting Chinese national flag on the South Korean soil or by being insensitive to the local South Korean culture. According to an article in *The Korea Times*, the bilateral relations between Seoul and Beijing have not yet been completely "[restored](#)". Notably, China had imposed sanctions against the installation

of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea.

### **Demise of North Korea's Former Chairman Kim Yong-nam**

The former chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea, Kim Yong-nam [passed](#) away in November 2025 at the age of 97. Reportedly, Kim Yong-nam led the North Korean diplomatic missions for several decades. The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un expressed his deep sorrow on the demise of Kim Yong-nam. Notably, Kim Yong-nam played a key role in leading the North Korean delegation to South Korea to attend the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics which also included Kim Yo-jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young extended his condolences on the death of Kim Yong-nam and remembered the role he played in the effort to normalise relations between Seoul and Pyongyang. The ambassadors from China and Vietnam also [paid](#) their tributes to Kim Yong-nam. Chinese Ambassador Wang Yajun and Vietnamese Ambassador Le Ba Vinh visited the funeral facility to lay flowers in show of respect to Kim Yong-nam. North Korea [performed](#) state funeral for Kim Yong-nam to honour his patriotism and efforts in the diplomatic affairs of the country which even went back to the years of Kim Il-sung, the grandfather of the current North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. According to the North Korean state media *KCNA*, the participant in the funeral ceremony of Kim Yong-nam [prayed](#) for him for his

contribution in building the North Korean socialism.

### **South Korea Planning to Increase Retirement Age**

In November, it was reported that South Korea is [planning](#) to enhance the retirement age from 60 to 65 due to the ageing population in the country. However, this move has triggered intense debate in South Korea as the country is also facing high youth unemployment rate. The increase in retirement age would also increase the cost for the industries. President Lee Jae Myung had pledged to increase the retirement age and it was reported to be "a major national priority". The ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) intended to bring a legislation to gradually enhance the retirement age to 65 by 2033. This initiative would [help](#) the elderly population in South Korea which face unstable income and would contribute to reduce old-age poverty in the country. South Korea has one of the fastest ageing populations, with a high poverty level among the elderly. In a separate report, due to the declining population in South Korea, some of its provinces are [encouraging](#) overseas Korean diaspora to return and settle in the country. Reportedly, some of the older people who had immigrated to foreign countries have returned to South Korea. These South Korean provinces have initiated various programmes and would provide incentives for "reverse immigration" to the Korean diaspora. Notably, overseas Koreans who are above the age of 65 are entitled to avail dual citizenship according to the South Korean laws.