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Contents

- South Korea Prepares for the Presidential Election
- South Korea-United States Trade Ties under Donald Trump
- Deepening North Korea-Russia Relations
- Low Birth Rate and Ageing Population in South Korea



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South Korea Prepares for the Presidential Election

In May, South Korea was reported to be gearing up for the fresh presidential election due to the impeachment of former President Yoon Suk Yeol. The election for the new South Korean president was stated to be on June 3, 2025. In May, the acting President and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo [resigned](#) to contest in the upcoming presidential election. Following the resignation of Han, the Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Lee Ju-ho [became](#) the third acting president of South Korea within a five months period. Also, on May 1, the Supreme Court asked for retrial of the presidential candidate of Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), Lee Jae-myung for [violating](#) the election law. Earlier, Lee was being projected as a [strong](#) candidate for the presidential position. This new ruling against Lee Jae-myung could have [effects](#) on the upcoming election for new president in South Korea. Interestingly, DPK [proposed](#) for a bill to halt trial of criminal cases against any president-elect. Later, the courts in South Korea [rescheduled](#) the trial of Lee Jae-myung until after the presidential election. The former Labour Minister of South Korea, Kim Moon-soo became the [nominee](#) for the presidential position from the People Power Party (PPP) of South Korea. The presidential candidates of DPK and PPP [differed](#) in their views on North Korea and foreign affairs. Notably, the former President Yoon Suk Yeol [left](#) the PPP on May 17.

South Korea-United States Trade Ties under Donald Trump

In May 2025, it was reported that South Korea was facing [challenges](#) due to the tariffs imposed by the United States. The trade policy of the second Donald Trump administration has pushed South Korean companies to seek support from the “[lobbying circuit](#)” in the US for the promotion of their business interests. Reportedly, the South Korean company Samsung was planning to construct a “[massive](#)” factory in the United States. The South Korean shipbuilding companies like HD Hyundai and Hanwha were reported to be [competing](#) to grab the opportunities provided by America’s renewed interest in ship construction. Notably, the collaboration in the field of shipbuilding between South Korea and the US was regarded as a “[bargaining chip](#)” in the trade negotiations between the two countries. According to an American expert, South Korea should give [priority](#) to its trade ties with the United States. In May, the officials from South Korea and the United States were reported to organise “[working-level tariff](#)” negotiations between the two countries in Washington. The industry ministry of South Korea planned to [support](#) the companies affected by the American tariffs. In another report, the South Korean government [denied](#) the claim that the country was in a hurry to conclude a trade deal with the United States ahead of the upcoming presidential election in South Korea. In May, South Korean exports [declined](#) by 2.4 percent, partly due to the American tariffs.

Deepening North Korea-Russia Relations

The relationship between North Korea and Russia has [strengthened](#). According to the North Korean state media report in May 2025, a new motor bridge is being [constructed](#) to connect North Korea and Russia. The ground-breaking event for the construction of this bridge was attended by the Premier of Cabinet of North Korea Pak Thae Song, and Prime Minister of Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin through video-conferencing. This road bridge across the Tumen River would further strengthen [cooperation](#) between North Korea and Russia as there is only rail bridge link between them which was built in 1959. There has also been close military [cooperation](#) between Pyongyang and Moscow, and North Korea has accepted that its soldiers are fighting in the Ukraine war in support of Russia. Interestingly, the North Korean soldiers were also reported to be [singing](#) Russian military anthem during their joint military training, as a show of solidarity between the two countries. The recent success of the Russian and North Korean troops in [retaking](#) the Kursk region from Ukrainian control was categorised by a senior official of the North Korean army as a “a triumph of justice over pure evil”. Pyongyang advocated for a “[multi-polarised](#)” international order in the backdrop of the strengthening alliance between North Korea and Russia. Also, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un made a [visit](#) to the Russian embassy in Pyongyang on the occasion of Russia’s Victory Day.

Low Birth Rate and Ageing Population in South Korea

South Korea is facing a low birth rate, and it became an [issue](#) during the campaign for the June 2025 presidential election in the country. According to a report in May 2025, the South Korean government is planning to [utilise](#) those houses which are found abandoned due to the declining population in the country for cheaper accommodation or for business purposes. According to another report, for majority of South Korean people in the age group of 20s to 40s, [career](#) and work have taken precedence over marriage or raising children. Interestingly, a sculpture in a botanical park in Seoul was reported to be [removed](#) in May 2025, because it apparently discourages South Koreans to have more babies. Another report that more childbirth is [detrimental](#) to the life expectancy of women caused controversy in South Korea. The increased academic pressure and declining birth rate have also [affected](#) South Korean children as they get less time and peers to play. A growing number of children in South Korea were also reported to [require](#) psychiatric care due to the increasing cases of anxiety disorder and depression among them. Notably, on May 5, South Koreans [celebrated](#) the annual Children’s Day in the country. Also, due to the ageing population in South Korea, the Presidential Economic, Social and Labor Council of South Korea [suggested](#) for the gradual extension of the employment age to 65 by 2033.