



Korea Digest is a monthly publication of the Korea Centre, School of International Relations and Politics, Mahatma Gandhi University, that compiles major political, security, economic and diplomatic developments in the Korean Peninsula. Korea Digest aims to track, highlight and provide brief analysis of important developments in the Korean Peninsula for the Indian audience.

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CONTENTS

1. The South Korean President attended the NATO summit.
2. Senior level defence talks were held between Saudi Arabia and South Korea.
3. Yoon visited the US nuclear submarine in a joint show of forces.
4. Republic of Korea to join US led multi-national cyber exercise.
5. Yoon's surprise visit to Ukraine.
6. A US soldier defected to North Korea.
7. North Korea fires ICBMs into the East Sea, creating unrest.
8. South Korean President's return from Europe.
9. Trilateral missile defence exercise between US, Japan and South Korea.
10. North Korea fires Cruise missiles into East Sea.
11. Kim Yo jong calls America 'delusional' if it they believes in the North Korean disarmament.
12. US President will host Japanese PM and South Korean President.

13. North Korea stole \$700 million of crypto currency says NIA.
14. 70th anniversary of the Armistice.
15. China and Russia must do what is needful to ensure peace in the Korean peninsula: US State department.
16. Chinese and Russian delegations visited North Korea
17. Four inter-Korean dialogue organisations abolished by the Unification Ministry of South Korea.

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1. SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT ATTENDED NATO SUMMIT

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol visited Lithuania for the NATO summit. This is the second time Yoon is attending the NATO summit; the previous one was in Spain. The summit was attended by the leaders of the 31 member states and four partner nations, which include South Korea. According to the Presidential office, the major discussions that were held during the summit were the war in Ukraine, the cooperation between the military alliance, and the emerging security threats. On the sidelines, Yoon also met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. A highlight will be Yoon's meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in the midst of the UN's decision that allowed the discharge of radioactive water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea. This decision by the UN and the approval given by the Yoon administration have triggered protests in South Korea. At the same time, Yoon's attendance at the NATO summit also had other significance, as it will help strengthen the alliance against North Korea's nuclear ambitions. South Korea and NATO adopted documents for bilateral cooperation across 11 sectors, including cyber security, non-proliferation, and emerging technologies. After the NATO summit in Lithuania, President Yoon visited Poland and had talks with President Andrzej Duda on deepening the bilateral partnership between the two countries and also on the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. After a five day visit in Poland, the South Korean President made an unannounced stop in Ukraine, where he met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian President, and announced additional assistance in the form of military supplies and humanitarian aid.

2. SENIOR- LEVEL DEFENSE TALKS HELD BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND SOUTH KOREA

South Korea's vice defence minister, Shin Beom, and Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili, chief of Saudi Arabia's General Staff, have held talks to increase arms deal cooperation in Riyadh. This was the third session of the bilateral committee on defence cooperation between Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Shin pointed out the need for more cooperation in the sectors of the arms industry, education, and high-level military personnel exchange. Shin also had a discussion with Saudi Arabia's assistant minister for defence, and he thanked Saudi Arabia for its support in evacuating its citizens from conflict-torn

Sudan. South Korea also asked for Riyadh's support for Seoul's efforts to keep peace on the Korean peninsula.

3. YOON VISITS US NUCLEAR SUBMARINE IN JOINT SHOW OF FORCE

President Yoon Suk Yeol made a visit to the Busan Naval Base and toured the USS Kentucky, which is an Ohio-class nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarine. The USS Robert E Lee was the last US ballistic missile submarine to visit South Korea, and that was back in 1981. This visit by an American SSBN to South Korea after 42 years is followed by Seoul and Washington's first Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) meeting. The idea behind this initiative is that it gives South Korea visibility in nuclear planning if North Korea conducts a nuclear strike on South Korea. With the visit of the USS Kentucky to the southeastern port city of South Korea, it commences the implementation of the Washington Declaration, which was signed by President Yoon and President Joe Biden in the month of April. The USS Kentucky is capable of launching 20 Trident II D-5 submarine-launched ballistic missiles, which act as an intimidating deterrent against a nuclear attack. President Yoon conveyed that if North Korea planned to attack South Korea, that would end the Kim regime. As a response and protest against the NCG and the visit of a US nuclear submarine, North Korea fired two Short Range Ballistic Missiles into the East Sea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff of South Korea condemned this as an act of provocation that destroys the peace of the international community and also a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

4. REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO JOIN US-LED MULTINATIONAL CYBER EXERCISE

South Korea's defense ministry made an announcement that Korea's cyber operations command will take part in the multinational cyber exercise that the United States leads. This event is scheduled to begin on July 28, and it comprises the participation of the 'Five Eyes' alliance of intelligence (U.S., Britain, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) and other partner nations. The core objective of this online exercise is to enhance skills in multinational collaboration for countering cyber threats and related information integration and analysis and to improve overall operational capabilities. The cyber

operations command plans to develop a future Korea- US cyber operations cooperation mechanism through bilateral training and exchanging professionals and technologies. This is the second time Republic of Korea is participating in the exercise, and they have proposed to join on a regular basis.

5. PRESIDENT YOON'S SURPRISE VISIT TO UKRAINE

After attending the NATO summit in Lithuania, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol made a surprise visit to war-torn Ukraine, which made clear the stance of the Republic of Korea in the Russia-Ukraine war. This visit was made at Ukraine's invitation. Yoon and Zelenskyy met at the Presidential palace for nearly two hours. During a joint press conference, Yoon promised that South Korea would assist Ukraine in the areas of humanitarian aid, security, and reconstruction projects under the banner of the Ukraine Peace Solidarity Initiative. Seoul and Kyiv will jointly pursue the peace formula summit as part of this initiative. South Korea will provide non-lethal military equipments. Yoon further mentioned that Seoul will cooperate with the World Bank to adjust a new fiscal policy to improve the economic condition of Ukraine. "Yoon - Zelenskyy" scholarships will be given to Ukrainian students in South Korea. This visit also marks the significance of Yoon Suk Yeol becoming the third South Korean President after Roh Moo-hyun (who visited Iraq in 2004) and Lee Myung-bak (who visited Afghanistan in 2010) to visit a country where there is an ongoing war. The only difference is that South Korean troops were present in Iraq and Afghanistan during the former President's visit, but not a single South Korean soldier is there in Ukraine

6. A US SOLDIER DEFECTED TO NORTH KOREA

Private Travis T. King, who joined the US military in 2021, defected to North Korea. He was facing disciplinary action for some 'unspecified infraction, said two officials. He is believed to be in North Korean custody. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin expressed his concern over the well-being of the soldier and added that Private Travis was in an orientation in the Joint Security Area, and he crossed the Military Demarcation Line wilfully and without authorization. The UN command mentioned that they are working with their Korean People's Army counterparts regarding this incident. This incident happens in the midst of high tensions on the Korean Peninsula, especially after the visit of the USS Kentucky to South Korea and the firing of ballistic

missiles by North Korea. Travis King is not the first US soldier to defect to North Korea; James Dresnok and Charles Jenkins are two famous US defectors to North Korea.

7. NORTH KOREA FIRES ICBM INTO EAST SEA; CREATES UNREST

Following the US aircraft spy operations in the region, North Korea implemented the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile into the East Sea, which caused tension. The missile flew about 1,000 kilometers before falling into the water. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said that they detected a missile launch in or around Pyongyang and condemned it, calling this attitude of the North Korean administration a significant provocation that has the capacity to destabilize the region and alter international harmony. In response to this launch, South Korean and American military and intelligence agencies came together against this threat. According to North Korea's defence, American aircrafts had 'intruded' North Korea's exclusive economic zone(EEC). Observers suggest that all these incidents might be a strategy to hide the failure of the former launch of a military spy satellite and to 'exhibit internal unity.

8. YOON'S RETURN FROM EUROPE

President Yoon Suk Yeol returned to Seoul after completing his European visit, which included Lithuania, Poland, and a brief, unexpected visit to Ukraine. The primary intentions of this European visit are Ukrainian reconstruction, global security, and reinforcement of business with NATO members. The deputy director of the National Security Office, Kim Tae-hyo made a statement that the South Korean government had arranged a package of nine for Ukraine, which includes security, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction. The reconstruction project would involve projects worth around \$1.5 trillion. In a joint statement with Poland, Yoon also denounced Russian interference in Ukraine. In Poland, Yoon met with entrepreneurs who are interested in Ukraine's reconstruction. This project includes IT, infrastructural development, energy, water resources, etc. In addition to Ukraine's issue, Yoon also promoted economic and security cooperation with NATO members and partners during his week-long visit to Europe. In Poland, South Korean and Polish business persons and management signed 33 MoUs regarding technology, service industries, and the energy sector. By attending the NATO summit, Yoon expressed his hope for denuclearizing the Korean peninsula and also for close collaboration with NATO countries.

9. TRILATERAL MISSILE DEFENCE EXERCISE BETWEEN US, SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN

The forces of South Korea, Japan, and the United States conducted a trilateral missile defence exercise in the international waters of the East Sea as a response to North Korea's recent launch of an ICBM. The exercise included three destroyers, namely ROKS Yulgok Yi I (South Korea), USS John Finn(USA), and JS Maya (Japan). The primary focus of the test was to practice procedures to detect and track a computer-simulated ballistic missile launch by North Korea and to share related information. An official added that with the trilateral cooperation between the three countries and a powerful response system, this trio can easily counter the North's nuclear and missile threats. In total, these countries have conducted four such exercises since President Yoon came into power. Air drills were also conducted against North Korea's ICBM launch, which involved a US B-52H strategic bomber.

10. KIM YO-JONG CALLS AMERICA DELUSIONAL IF THEY BELIEVES IN NORTH KOREAN DISARMAMENT

Kim Yo jong, who is a power player in North Korean politics and also the sister of Kim Jong un, calls America delusional if they think North Korea will disarm itself. She criticised the US's policy of expanding its military alliance with South Korea. According to her, such actions would only make it difficult for her country to engage in talks and negotiations. She also added that the US's effort to hill down North Korean advancement will go in vain. Kim also rejected America's calls for talks, saying they were unconditional and a cunning plan to hinder North Korea's progress. She said that the firing of the ICBM was just the beginning and would do anything to ensure North Korea's sovereignty.

11. US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN WILL HOST THE JAPANESE PM AND SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

According to the White House, President Joe Biden will host a trilateral meeting with South Korean President Yoon Suk yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on August 18th at Camp David. It is also fascinating to note that the Korean statement released from the Presidential office used the word 'meeting' instead of 'summit', which suggests that Yoon's meeting with Kishida and Biden could become more

regular in the future. This will be the first separate meeting between Yoon, Biden, and Kishida, as all the earlier meetings happened on the sidelines of other conferences like the G7. Since Yoon took office, there have been more frequent meetings with the leaders of America and Japan. Yoon's last state visit to the US was the first by a Korean state official in 12 years. One of the core agenda items of this visit will be the launch of a real-time missile warning data-sharing system that could deter threats, especially from North Korea. South Korea's national security adviser, Kim Tae-hyo said that matters of trilateral security cooperation, economic security, and exchange could also be discussed by the state leaders. At the same time, there is a considerable focus on whether the upcoming meeting in August might contribute to the stabilisation of the industrial supply chain and help the technological leadership in the field of semiconductor chips and more. As per the statement released by the Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre the three leaders will discuss ways to strengthen ties with the ASEAN nations and the Pacific islands.

12. NORTH KOREA STOLE \$700 MILLION OF CRYPTO CURRENCY IN 2022: NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

North Korean state-sponsored hackers stole 700 million US dollars, which is enough to conduct the launch of 30 ICBMs, according to the state intelligence agency of South Korea. A senior official from NIS concluded that Pyongyang wasn't able to monetize it yet. In recent times, North Korea has frequently tried to hack into the space and defence industries of South Korea and other countries. It is estimated that 30% of North Korea's foreign currency earnings come straight from this hacking activity. Recently, a North Korean hacker was caught last month while he tried to get a job in the overseas office of a South Korean energy company.

13. NORTH KOREA FIRES CRUISE MISSILES INTO YELLOW SEA

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said that North Korea had fired several cruise missiles into the Yellow Sea. To get an understanding of what missiles were fired and other details, both US and South Korean intelligence agencies monitored the launch. The JCS added that

they are watching the additional activities by North Korea. The visit of the US submarine USS Kentucky, the inaugural session of the South Korea-US Nuclear Consultative Group, the formation of an axis between US-Japan-South Korea, and the continuous missile tests of North Korea have created much tension on the Korean peninsula.

14. 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE

July 27 marked the 70th anniversary of the armistice made between North Korea and South Korea, which ended the Korean War in 1953. A ceasefire was signed between the military leaders. Both nations celebrated the anniversary of the end of the war in the midst of growing tensions. South Korean President Yoon Suk yeol paid respect to the fallen soldiers who fought under the UN banner at the UN Memorial Cemetery in Busan. 62 UN war veterans attended the ceremony. Delegations from 22 countries took part in this function. Meanwhile, in North Korea, Russian and Chinese delegations took part in the ceremony. Pyongyang calls July 27 Victory Day, against US-led forces. The North calls the Korean War the ‘Great Fatherland Liberation War’. North Korean leader Kim Jong un visited the martyr's cemetery in Pyongyang. He was accompanied by North Korean Defence Minister Kang Sun-nam. Kim also visited the cemetery of fallen Chinese soldiers and paid his tribute. The Korean conflict began in 1950 as North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel, which divided the Korean peninsula into the Soviet-backed North Korea and the US supported South Korea. Millions of souls lost their lives during the battle on both sides.

15. CHINA AND RUSSIA MUST DO WHAT IS NEEDFUL TO ENSURE PEACE IN KOREAN PENINSULA: US STATE DEPT

As members of the United Nations Security Council, both Russia and China are obliged to bring North Korea to negotiations, says Vedant Patel, who is a state department spokesperson. He also added that America is ready to engage with North Korea without any preconditions. He said that both the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China must find ways to prevent North Korea from acting as a threatening agent that causes unrest in the international community. His remark came after North Korea invited Russia and China to their ceremony, which celebrated the 70th anniversary of

the armistice with South Korea. By using their Veto power as Security Council members of the UN, both Russia and China have helped North Korea avoid several sanctions for its missile provocations. Patel also added that the US continues to have a commitment to denuclearizing the Korean peninsula.

16. CHINESE AND RUSSIAN DELEGATION VISITS NORTH KOREA

A Delegation from Russia under Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and a delegation from China under Polit Bureau member Li Hongzhong visited North Korea to attend the 70th anniversary of the armistice between the two Koreas. The General Secretary of the Workers' Party, Kim Jong un welcomed the Russian delegation, and the Chinese delegation was welcomed by Kim Song nam and other high-level Party leaders. Kim Jong un gladly welcomed the Russian military delegation to the DPRK. Kim thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for the support he and his country are giving to North Korea. Both parties shared regards about the long-standing relationship between Russia and North Korea. They exchanged mutual concerns regarding the national defence and security of both countries. The Chinese delegation was warmly welcomed in Pyongyang. Wang Yajun, who is the Chinese ambassador to North Korea, was also present. Pyongyang gave huge cheers to the Chinese delegation as a tribute to the lives of Chinese people who fought along with the North Korean forces during the Korean War.

16. FOUR INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE ORGANISATIONS ABOLISHED BY THE UNIFICATION MINISTRY

The unification ministry of South Korea plans to abolish four inter-Korean organisations that cater to the dialogue between the two Koreas, which include the Inter-Korean and Exchange and Cooperation Bureau, the Inter-Korean Cooperation District Policy Planning Directorate within the unification ministry, the Office of Inter-Korean Dialogue, and the Inter-Korean Transit Office. The ministry will proceed to merge these units into a single body, which would result in the loss of jobs for around 15% of the current workforce of these units. The restructuring was inevitable because of the growing tensions between the United States and China and also because of the suspended exchange between North Korea and South Korea. The restructuring doesn't mean that the government is planning to drop the inter-Korean dialogue. Earlier, South

Korean President Yoon had criticised the Unification Ministry for its soft corner towards North Korea; after this remark, a hard-liner on Pyongyang, Kim Yung-ho was appointed as the new Unification Minister. The new department that is going to be established will specifically address issues related to South Korean abductees, prisoners of war, and other citizens who are detained by North Korea.
