

# KOREA NEWSLETTER

Vol 2 | Issue 2  
February 2025

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

## New Year Celebrations in South and North Korea

On the occasion of the onset of 2025, there were celebrations in both South and North Korea. According to the Chinese zodiac system, the year 2025 is being [regarded](#) as the “Year of the Snake”. Therefore, the year 2025 symbolises wisdom, flexibility and new initiatives. However, in South Korea, due to the political turmoil caused by the failed martial law, along with the Jeju Air [crash](#) in December 2024, the New Year celebrations remained a low profile event. Also, the governments in both Korean states made resolutions for the New Year ahead. In South Korea, the acting President Choi Sang-mok pledged for the “[security and stability](#)” of the country in his New Year’s address to the South Korean people. In North Korea, the New Year was [welcomed](#) with huge celebrations at the May Day Stadium in Pyongyang, which was attended by the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un along with other prominent leaders and officials of the country. Kim Jong-un conveyed his best wishes to the people of North Korea on New Year. Earlier, on the last day of 2024, a banquet ceremony was [held](#) at the People’s Palace of Culture for the prominent achievers of North Korea in 2024, and to mark the beginning of a New Year. Both South and North Koreans also [celebrated](#) the traditional Lunar New Year or *Seollal*.

## Detention Warrant against South Korean President

The year 2025 began with “[political uncertainty](#)” in South Korea. Earlier, the powers of the South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol were [suspended](#) on December 14, 2024 by the National Assembly through an impeachment motion. On the other hand, in a survey reported in January 2025, the majority of the South Korean voters were stated to be in [favour](#) of the impeachment of President Yoon. Due to President Yoon’s role in the failed implementation of the martial law in the country, the Seoul Western District Court [approved](#) a detention warrant against him. The approval of the warrant had led to a large [gathering](#) of President Yoon’s supporters near his official residence in Seoul. According to the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) in South Korea, the detention warrant against President Yoon was due to his [abuse](#) of power and his refusal to accept three summonses sent by CIO. President Yoon pledged to fight against the warrant “[until the end](#)”. Also, security staff of President Yoon [resisted](#) his detainment by the investigators. However, President Yoon was [detained](#) for investigation on January 15, 2025. Subsequently, President Yoon was officially [arrested](#) on January 19, 2025 with the approval of the court. On January 26, 2025, Yoon became the first sitting president to be [indicted](#) on charges of insurrection in South Korea.

## South Korea Probes Jeju Air and Air Busan Accidents

In January 2024, the South Korean authorities began their investigation to find the cause of Jeju Air crash incident in December last year and [retrieved](#) the flight data recorder. The horrible [crash](#) of a flight operated by the South Korean company Jeju Air was regarded as the worst disaster in the country's domestic aviation history which killed 179 people. In this regard, a team of South Korean police [searched](#) the Muan airport where the incident had happened. The search operations [continued](#) even on the second day to further probe the cause of the accident. The police [investigated](#) the Jeju Air office in Seoul as well. It was reported in South Korean media that the airline pilots did not receive [guidance](#) about the existence of a concrete structure at the airport which was one of the reasons that led to this disaster. There were also concerns that the low-cost airlines like Jeju Air had [overlooked](#) the maintenance services of its aircrafts. On its part, the Jeju Air denied [shortage](#) of the maintenance engineers that could have led to this disaster. Later, the two engines of the Jeju Air plane were [recovered](#) from the accident site by the investigators to find the cause of this mishap. Another [accident](#) was also probed for fire which broke out in an Air Busan plane at Gimhae International Airport on January 28, 2025.

## New US President Donald Trump and South Korea

In January 2025, it was reported that the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump in the United States had caused [anxieties](#) in South Korea, largely due to his economic policies. However, the impeachment procedure and detention warrant against the South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in January apparently also led to an increase in Trump's [popularity](#) among Yoon's supporters. Evidently, American flags were often [displayed](#) by the Yoon's supporters along with the South Korean flags during protests against the opposition parties. Also, in January, the South Korean Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun was reported to [visit](#) the United States to discuss the economic issues ahead of the incoming Trump administration. On the other hand, acting South Korean President Choi Sang-mok called for "[close cooperation](#)" with the new administration in the United States. There were reports that the second administration of Donald Trump may seek [support](#) of the South Korean industries in building American naval vessels. However, the comment by Trump's Defense Secretary nominee Pete Hegseth regarding North Korea as a "[nuclear power](#)" stirred controversy in South Korea. After his inauguration as the president, Trump also [referred](#) North Korea as a nuclear power. On January 29, 2025, Trump's nominee for Commerce Secretary criticised South Korea for having "[taken advantage of](#)" the United States.