

# KOREA NEWSLETTER

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## Donald Trump's Immigration Policy and South Korea

In February 2025, there were [apprehensions](#) that the immigration policy of Donald Trump administration could also affect South Koreans living in the United States. According to the report, about 1,50,000 South Koreans living in the United States could be [deported](#) back to South Korea. This includes some 20,000 adoptees from South Korea who have not yet been granted American citizenship. In another report, a South Korean national was [arrested](#) by the authorities in the United States for possessing unlawful pornography materials, which was also a part of the crackdown on the undocumented illegal immigrants in the country. According to a report published in the South Korean media, this incident raised fears among the Korean American communities about [stricter](#) immigration rules, which could be “disastrous” for the South Koreans living in the United States. This issue also raised [concerns](#) for the South Korean government. In February 2025, the United States planned to [impose](#) tariffs on goods imported from Mexico, Canada and China with regards to Trump's policy over “illegal immigration and drug trafficking”. It was reported that Trump's “[trade war](#)” could have detrimental effects on the South Korean companies. The [support](#) for awarding Nobel Peace Prize to Donald Trump by a leader of the main opposition Democratic Party in South Korea also stirred controversy due to Trump's trade and immigration policies, which could adversely affect thousands of South Koreans.

## 75 Years of North Korea–Vietnam Diplomatic Ties

The year 2025 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of the diplomatic relations between North Korea and Vietnam. This year is also being celebrated as the “Year of Friendship” between North Korea and Vietnam. It was reported in the North Korean state media in February 2025 that the governments of these two countries [exchanged](#) greetings, and the Vietnamese embassy in Pyongyang hosted a reception ceremony on this occasion. During the reception, the Vietnamese ambassador to North Korea [spoke](#) about the friendly relationship between the two nations which was built by their late leaders Kim Il Sung and Ho Chi Minh of North Korea and Vietnam, respectively. According to the report, Pak Thae Song, premier of the Cabinet of North Korea sent a message to the prime minister of Vietnam regarding their “[friendly and cooperative](#)” bilateral relations. Pak Thae Song mentioned in his greeting message about the North Korea-Vietnam summit in Hanoi in March 2019. In 2019, the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had [visited](#) this Southeast Asian country. North Korean official news agency, *KCNA* also reported in February, that the Foreign Minister of North Korea, Choe Son Hui [received](#) wishes to mark this occasion from Bui Thanh Son, deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Vietnam. The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un also sent a congratulatory [message](#) for 95<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

## Chinese AI Startup DeepSeek and South Korea

The dramatic success of DeepSeek was significantly reported in the South Korean media in February 2025. This Artificial intelligence (AI) startup from China witnessed rapid [popularity](#) in South Korea as it attracted about 1.2 million customers weekly since its launch in January 20, 2025, and was ranked second after ChatGPT. In February, this AI app became a [rage](#) and was stated to be in the top ranking position in the Google Play and Apple's App Store in South Korea. Nonetheless, there were worries about the privacy and data protection issues related to this Chinese app, which led to its [restriction](#) by various companies and ministries in South Korea. Apprehensions were also raised that the South Korean chipmaker companies, such as Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix could face [challenges](#) from the AI startup DeepSeek. Notably, South Korea's Acting President Choi Sang-mok referred DeepSeek as a "[fresh shock](#)". However, it was reported in the South Korean media that other South Korean tech companies like Naver and Kakao could [benefit](#) from the emergence of DeepSeek due to the open-access and low-cost of this AI startup. In February, Kakao also announced [collaboration](#) with an American company OpenAI to use ChatGPT for providing AI services to the customers. This new partnership with a South Korean tech company by the OpenAI is probably a strategy to counter the increasing dominance of DeepSeek.

## South Korea Investigates Martial Law Imposition by President Yoon

The South Korean investigators continued their investigation regarding the botched martial law implementation by President Yoon Suk Yeol on December 3, 2024. In February 2025, the South Korean National Police Agency's National Office of Investigation (NOI) began its [probe](#) against the Presidential Security Service (PSS) for obstructing the detention warrant for President Yoon. In another report, a former National Intelligence Service (NIS) official and two former military commanders were stated to be [investigated](#) for the impeachment procedure against Yoon by the Constitutional Court of South Korea. Also, a parliamentary committee which is probing charges of insurrection and is led by the opposition party members, [asked](#) President Yoon Suk Yeol, former Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun, Defense Intelligence Command chief, Maj. Gen. Moon Sang-ho and President Yoon's personal secretary, Kang Ui-goo to present their testimonies at the National Assembly. According to a report, the Yoon administration had [mobilised](#) 1,605 soldiers and 3,709 police officers during the six hours of martial law declaration in December 2024, and had ordered to snap the supply of water and electricity to the buildings hosting media companies. The former commanders of the South Korean army gave their [statement](#) against President Yoon's failed martial law implementation during interrogation by the investigators on February 4, 2025. Police also [questioned](#) the impeached Prime Minister Han Duck-soo for suspected charges of insurrection. Later, President Yoon was [booked](#) for hindering detention warrant.