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Contents

- **Massive Floods in North Korea**
- **North Korea Deploys New Weapons against South Korea**
- **Controversy over “Pro-Japan” Director of Independence Hall in South Korea**
- **COVID-19 Cases Rising in South Korea**



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Massive Floods in North Korea

North Korea was in the grip of devastating floods in August 2024. The severity of the floods had prompted the North Korean government to declare “[emergency](#)” and Pyongyang was unusually transparent about this natural disaster. The devastation had been more acute in the northwestern regions of North Korea where flood affected thousands of people. About 4,000 houses in Uiju county and Sinuiju city in North Phyongan Province were reported to have been [inundated by the floods](#). Many people in the Jagang and Ryanggang provinces were also affected by the floods. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un made a [personal visit](#) to the flood-hit areas. He [directed](#) officials to conduct rescue operations, and warned of severe punishment to those who neglected their responsibilities. Also, the state media in North Korea called upon to build “[Socialist Paradises](#)” in those areas which were affected by the flood. On August 1, South Korea offered [humanitarian aid](#) for flood victims but Pyongyang did not respond. On the other hand, the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un criticised the South Korean media for spreading “[false rumours](#)” about the number of casualties and accidents that happened during the recent floods in North Korea. But the South Korean Ministry of Unification stated that this strategy of North Korea was to [divert public attention](#) from the severity of the damage caused by the floods. Notably, Pyongyang [expressed gratitude](#) for Russia’s offer for aid and assistance to the flood-affected North Korean people. However, North Korea [rejected all offers](#) of foreign aid for the flood victims.

North Korea Deploys New Weapons against South Korea

The North Korean state media reported on August 5, 2024 that the country has introduced indigenously-built “[250 new-type tactical ballistic missile launchers](#)” in its military. The introduction of this new weapon system was done with a huge display and celebration. It was reported in the *Rodong Sinmun* that this [military accomplishment](#) has fulfilled the agenda of the Workers’ Party of Korea to “build a rich country with a strong army”. On this occasion, the North Korean leader [Kim Jong-un praised](#) the defence scientists, industry workers and officials for building this new-type military system and helping the country to attain self-reliance in defence capabilities. However, this new military capability of North Korea could pose a [significant threat](#) to the South Korean missile defence system. The South Korean media reported that the new missile launching system of North Korea is [believed to be](#) “Hwasong-11” launchers, which would probably be deployed near the South Korean border. Almost half of South Korea would come [under the range](#) of these launchers. It is also assumed that Kim Jong-un’s current military provocations are a [reflection of resentment](#) due to the failure of negotiations with the United States during the administrations of Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden. On the other hand, the United States has called upon North Korea [to refrain from](#) provocative actions and choose the path of negotiation. During this event of the inauguration of the new weapon system, Kim Jong-un was accompanied with his young daughter Kim

Ju-ae, which has also [sparked rumours](#) that she could apparently be the next heir of the Kim dynasty regime in North Korea.

Controversy over “Pro-Japan” Director of Independence Hall in South Korea

The issue of “pro-Japan” chief of the Independence Hall in South Korea who took charge on August 8, 2024 has fanned massive controversy. It is alleged that the newly appointed director of the Independence Hall, Kim Hyung-seok [holds positive views](#) about the role of the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) over the Korean Peninsula in modernising the country. An organisation called the “Heritage of Korean Independence”, which includes the descendants of the freedom fighters who fought against the Japanese colonialism, even [threatened to boycott](#) the luncheon ceremony for August 15 Liberation Day by the Presidential office in protest against the appointment of Kim Hyung-seok. The opposition Democratic Party of Korea [demanded the removal](#) of Kim from the post of directorship of Independence Hall. The administration of President Yoon Suk Yeol has also been [criticised for appointing](#) “New Right” elements with pro-Japanese views in several important institutions of the country. It was also reported that due to the call for boycott of government-sponsored Liberation Day events over the appointment of Kim, South Korea had [separate ceremonies](#) on August 15. However, President Yoon [expressed disappointment](#) over the controversies related to the Kim’s appointment.

COVID-19 Cases Rising in South Korea

In August 2024, it was reported that the number of COVID-19 patients have [sharply increased](#). As a result, the South Korean government is planning to [restart](#) the vaccination programme against the new COVID variant, KP.3. The older people and those regarded as high-risk patients were being [closely monitored](#) by the health authorities. However, the health authorities in South Korea were still [hesitant](#) to call it a new wave of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. But there are concerns that the cases of COVID-19 cases may [further increase](#) and there has been an increase in the use of facemasks and medical companies are facing shortage of COVID-19 related medicines. The number of [child patients](#) of this pandemic also increased in the country in the month of August. It was reported that with the [reopening of schools](#) in South Korea after the summer break could lead to a rise of COVID-19 cases among the children. The lack of [compulsory quarantine](#) guidelines in South Korea was also being blamed for the recent spike in the COVID-19 cases. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) increased its [efforts to control](#) the pandemic and have enhanced the monitoring of the COVID-19 cases within the country and in foreign countries. However, by the end of August, COVID-19 [cases dropped](#) in South Korea.