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# Country Guides News and Background Notes

## Korea

코리아, 高麗, Korean Hanguk or Choson, region and historic country (85,049 sq mi/220,277 sq km), E Asia. A peninsula, 600 mi (966 km) long, Korea separates the Sea of Japan (called the East Sea by Koreans) on the east from the Yellow Sea (and Korea Bay [or West Korea Bay], a northern arm of the Yellow Sea) on the west. On the south it is bounded by the Korea Strait (connecting the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea) and on the north its land boundaries with China (c.500 mi/800 km) and with Russia (only c.11 mi/18 km) are marked chiefly by the great Yalu (Korean Amnok ) and Tumen (Korean Duman or Tuman ) rivers.

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### Land and People

The Korean peninsula is largely mountainous; the principal series of ranges, extending along the east coast, rises (in the northeast) to 9,003 ft (2,744 m) at Mt. Paektu (Baekdu), the highest peak in Korea. Most rivers are relatively short and many are unnavigable, filled with rapids and waterfalls; important rivers, in addition to the Yalu and Tumen, are the Han, the Geum, the Taedong (Daedong), the Nakdong, and the Seomjin. Off the heavily indented coast (c.5,400 mi/8,690 km long) lie some 3,420 islands, most of them rocky and uninhabited (of the inhabited islands, about half have a population of less than 100); the main island group is in the Korean Archipelago in the Yellow Sea. The climate of Korea ranges from dry and extremely cold winters in the north to almost tropical conditions in parts of the south.

Many Koreans are Confucianists or Buddhists, although the people tend to be eclectic in their religious practices. Korean Confucianism, for example, has developed into more of an ethical system than a religion, and its influence is wide and pervasive. Of the various indigenous religions, Chondogyo (a native mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) is the most influential. South Korea has a large number of practicing Christians, roughly a quarter of the population. (Roman Catholicism was introduced in the late 18th cent., and Protestantism in the late 19th cent.) The North Korean government has actively suppressed religion as contrary to Marxist belief.

Korean is spoken in both countries, and English is often taught in South Korean schools. South Korea has some 200 institutions of higher learning, about one half of which are in Seoul; these include colleges and universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, and other specialized institutions. The emphasis in North Korea has been on specialized and technical education. There are many technical colleges, and the major university, Kim Il Sung, is on the outskirts of Pyongyang.

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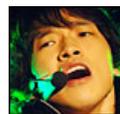
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## Economy

Korea once had large timber resources. In the North, reforestation and conservation programs have helped reverse the effects of excessive cutting during the Japanese occupation (1910–45). Predominant trees are larch, oak, alder, pine, spruce, and fir. Forests in the South were depleted as a result of illegal cutting after 1945 and damage during the Korean War (1950–53). However, reforestation programs have helped to remedy the loss.

Korea has great mineral wealth, most of it (80%–90%) concentrated in the North. Of the peninsula's five major minerals—gold, iron ore, coal, tungsten, and graphite—only tungsten and amorphous graphite are found principally in the South. South Korea has only 10% of the peninsula's rich coal and iron deposits. Its minerals are widely scattered, and mining operations are generally small scale, although tungsten is an important export item. In the North, modern mining methods have been instituted, and minerals and metals account for a significant portion of the country's export revenue. North Korea is especially rich in iron and coal and has some 200 different minerals of economic value. Some of the other more important minerals that are produced are copper, lead, zinc, uranium, manganese, gold, silver, and tungsten.

Because of the mountainous and rocky terrain, less than 20% of Korean land is arable. Rice is the chief crop, with wet paddy fields constituting about half of the farmland. Paddies are found along the coasts, in reclaimed tidal areas, and in river valleys. Barley, wheat, corn, soybeans, and grain sorghums are also extensively cultivated, especially in the uplands; other crops include cotton, tobacco, fruits, potatoes, beans, and sweet potatoes. Before the country was divided (1945), the colder and less fertile north depended heavily upon the south for food. Agricultural self-sufficiency became a major goal of the North Korean government, and mechanized methods were introduced there in and in the South. Both governments expanded irrigation facilities, constructed numerous dams, and initiated land reclamation projects; however, the North has suffered severe food shortages. Livestock previously played a minor role in Korean agriculture, especially in the North, where the steep and often barren hills are unsuitable for large-scale grazing, but since the end of the Korean War beef has become a significant component of the diet in the South.

The fishing waters off Korea are among the best in the world; the long coastline and numerous islands, inlets, and reefs provide excellent fishing grounds, and the presence of both a warm and a cold current attracts a great variety of species. Species also are raised in aquaculture facilities. Korean deep-sea fishing ships range into the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans; in the 1990s, South Korea's fish catch was the seventh largest in the world.

The Korean economy was shattered by the war of 1950 to 1953. Postwar reconstruction was abetted by enormous amounts of foreign aid (in the North from Communist countries and in the South chiefly from the United States) and intensive government economic development programs. The greatest industrial advances were made during the 1960s; in that decade the South experienced an 85% increase in productivity and a 250% rise in per capita gross national product. Economic development throughout Korea has been uneven, with the South showing significantly greater gains. The per capita gross domestic product of the South is some 20 times that of the North. In the South such consumer goods industries as textiles, garments, and footwear have given way to heavy industry, consumer electronics, and information industries. A great variety of products are now manufactured; these include electrical and electronic equipment, steel, automobiles, chemicals, cement, ships, and ceramic goods.

The North, too, has changed from a predominantly agricultural society (in 1946) to an industrial one; with abundant mineral resources and hydropower, 60% of its national product is now derived from mining and manufacturing. Development was impeded, however, by the rigid economic system, and the economy severely affected by a loss of trading partners after the collapse of the Communist world. In 2002 the government instituted a series of limited economic reforms, including letting markets set prices of many goods and services and permitting private traders. Major North Korean products include iron, steel, and other metals; machinery; military products; textiles (synthetics, wool, cotton, silk); and chemicals.

The industrialization of both North and South has been accompanied by improved transportation. By the end of the Korean War the rail system had been destroyed, and paved highways were almost nonexistent. The railroads have been extensively rebuilt, and in the South high-speed lines connect Seoul with Daegu and Busan in the southeast and Gwangju in the southwest. The South Korean government also has completed a series of superhighways connecting Seoul with numerous major cities. There is domestic air service, and international airports are located at Seoul, Busan, and Pyongyang. The expansion of port facilities at Busan and Incheon has vastly increased their capacity.

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## History

### Early History to Japanese Rule

The Koreans, descended from Tungusic tribal peoples, are a distinct racial and cultural group. According to Korean legend, Tangun established Old Choson in NW Korea in 2333 BC, and the Korean calendar enumerates the years from this date. Chinese sources assert that Ki-tze (Kija), a Shang dynasty refugee, founded a colony at Pyongyang in 1122 BC, but the first Korean ruler recorded in contemporaneous records is Wiman, possibly a Chinese invader who overthrew Old Choson and established his rule in N Korea in 194 BC. Chinese forces subsequently conquered (c.100 BC) the eastern half of the peninsula. Lolang, near modern Pyongyang, was the chief center of Chinese rule.

Koguryo, a native Korean kingdom, arose in the north on both sides of the Yalu River by the 1st cent. AD; tradition says it was founded in 37 BC. By the 4th cent. AD it had conquered Lolang, and at its height under King Kwanggaeto (r.391–413) occupied much of what is now Korea and NE China. In the 6th and 7th cent. the kingdom resisted several Chinese invasions. Meanwhile in the south, two main kingdoms emerged, Paekche (traditionally founded 18 BC, but significant beginning c.AD 250) in the west and Silla (traditionally founded 57 BC, but significant beginning c.AD 350) in the east. After forming an alliance with Tang China, Silla conquered Paekche and Koguryo by 668, and then expelled the Chinese and unified much of the peninsula. Remnants of Koguryo

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formed the kingdom of Parhae (north of the Taedong River and largely in E Manchuria), which lasted until 926.

Under Silla's rule, Korea prospered and the arts flourished; Buddhism, which had entered Korea in the 4th cent., became dominant in this period. In 935 the Silla dynasty, which had been in decline for a century, was overthrown by Wang Kon, who had established (918) the Koryo dynasty (the name was selected as an abbreviated form of Koguryo and is the source of the name Korea). During the Koryo period, literature was cultivated, and although Buddhism remained the state religion, Confucianism—introduced from China during the Silla years and adapted to Korean customs—controlled the pattern of government. A coup in 1170 led to a period of military rule. In 1231, Mongol forces invaded from China, initiating a war that was waged intermittently for some 30 years. Peace came when Koryo accepted Mongol suzerainty, and a long period of Koryo-Mongol alliance followed. In 1392, Yi Songgye, a general who favored the Ming dynasty (which had replaced the Mongols in China), seized the throne and established the Choson dynasty.

The Choson (or Yi) dynasty, which was to rule until 1910, built a new capital at Hanseong (Seoul) and established Confucianism as the official religion. Early in the dynasty (15th cent.) printing with movable metal type, which had been developed two centuries earlier, became widely used, and the Korean alphabet was developed. The 1592 invasion by the Japanese shogun Hideyoshi was driven back by Choson and Ming forces, but only after six years of great devastation and suffering. Manchu invasions in the first half of the 17th cent. resulted in Korea being made (1637) a tributary state of the Manchu dynasty. Subsequent factional strife gave way, in the 18th cent., to economic prosperity and a cultural and intellectual renaissance. Korea limited its foreign contacts during this period and later resisted, longer than China or Japan, trade with the West, which led to its being called the Hermit Kingdom.

In 1876, Japan forced a commercial treaty with Korea, and to offset the Japanese influence, trade agreements were also concluded (1880s) with the United States and European nations. Japan's control was tightened after the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), when Japanese troops moved through Korea to attack Manchuria. These troops were never withdrawn, and in 1905 Japan declared a virtual protectorate over Korea and in 1910 formally annexed the country. The Japanese instituted vast social and economic changes, building modern industries and railroads, but their rule (1910–45) was harsh and exploitative. Sporadic Korean attempts to overthrow the Japanese were unsuccessful, and after 1919 a provisional Korean government, under Syngman Rhee, was established at Shanghai, China.

### A Country Divided

In World War II, at the Cairo Conference (1943), the United States, Great Britain, and China promised Korea independence. At the end of the war Korea was arbitrarily divided into two zones as a temporary expedient; Soviet troops were north and Americans south of the line of lat. 38°N. The Soviet Union thwarted UN efforts to hold elections and reunite the country under one government. When relations between the Soviet Union and the United States worsened, trade between the two zones ceased; great economic hardship resulted, since the regions were economically interdependent, industry and trade being concentrated in the North and agriculture in the South.

In 1948 two separate regimes were formally established—the Republic of Korea in the South, and the Democratic People's Republic under Communist rule in the North. By mid-1949 all Soviet and American troops were withdrawn, and two rival Korean governments were in operation, each eager to unify the country under its own rule. In June, 1950, the North Korean army launched a surprise attack against South Korea, initiating the Korean War, and with it, severe hardship, loss of life, and enormous devastation.

After the war the boundary was stabilized along a line running from the Han estuary generally northeast across the 38th parallel to a point south of Kosong (Kuum-ni), with a no-man's land or demilitarized zone (DMZ), 1.24 mi (2 km) wide and occupying a total of 487 sq mi (1,261 sq km), on either side of the boundary. Throughout the 1950s and 60s an uneasy truce prevailed; thousands of soldiers were poised on each side of the demilitarized zone, and there were occasional shooting incidents. In 1971 negotiations between North and South Korea provided the first hope for peaceful reunification of the peninsula; in Nov., 1972, an agreement was reached for the establishment of joint machinery to work toward unification.

The countries met several times during the 1980s to discuss reunification, and in 1990 there were three meetings between the prime ministers of North and South Korea. These talks have yielded some results, such as the exchange of family visits organized in 1989. The problems blocking complete reunification, however, continue to be substantial. Two incidents of terrorism against South Korea were widely attributed to North Korea: a 1983 bombing that killed several members of the South Korean government, and the 1987 destruction of a South Korean airliner over the Thailand-Myanmar border. In 1996, North Korea said it would cease to recognize the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas, and North Korean troops made incursions into the zone. In 1999 a North Korean torpedo boat was sunk by a South Korean vessel in South Korean waters following a gun battle, and another deadly naval confrontation following a North Korean incursion in 2002.

In early 2000, however, the North engaged in talks with a number of Western nations, seeking diplomatic relations, and South and North agreed to a presidential summit in Pyongyang. The historic and cordial meeting produced an accord that called for working toward reunification (though without specifying how) and for permitting visits between families long divided as a result of the war. Given the emotional appeal of reunification, it is likely that the North-South dialogue will continue, despite the problems involved; however, the tensions that developed in late 2002 have, for the time being, derailed any significant further reunification talks. Economic contacts have continued to expand, however, and South Korea has become a significant trade partner for the North. The North also receives substantial aid from the South. In 2007 a rail crossing through the DMZ was symbolically reopened when two trains made test runs on the rebuilt track. Many U.S. troops still remain in the South, though their numbers have decreased since the 1960s.

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## North Korea

North Korea, officially Democratic People's Republic of Korea (2005 est. pop. 22,912,000), 46,540 sq mi (120,538 sq km), founded on May 1, 1948, has its capital at Pyongyang, the largest city. North Korea is divided into nine provinces and three special cities.

North Korea, although nominally a republic governed by a representative assembly, is actually ruled by the Communist party (known in Korea as the Korea Workers' party). Until his death in 1994, all governmental institutions were controlled by Kim Il Sung (widely known as The Great Leader), who had been premier and then president since the country's inception in 1948. A personality cult had glorified Kim, but by the mid-1990s the rapid economic growth of North Korea's early years had given way first to stagnation and then to hardship, and there was widespread dissatisfaction with the repressive regime. Increasingly, Kim's son, Kim Jong Il, had assumed the day-to-day management of the government and, at Kim Il Sung's death in 1994, the son took over leadership of the country. He was named secretary of the Communist party in 1997 and consolidated his power with the title of National Defense Commission chairman in 1998. Under Kim, diplomatic relations have been established with a number of Western nations.

After the Korean War, the Communist government of North Korea used the region's rich mineral and power resources as the basis for an ambitious program of industrialization and rehabilitation. With Chinese and Soviet aid, railroads, industrial plants, and power facilities were rebuilt. Farms were collectivized, and industries were nationalized. In a series of multiyear economic development plans, the coal, iron, and steel industries were greatly expanded, new industries were introduced, and the mechanization of agriculture was pushed. By the mid-1990s more than 90% of the economy was socialized and 95% of the country's manufactured products were made by state-owned enterprises. A serious postwar population loss, resulting from the exodus of several million people to the South, was somewhat offset by the immigration of Chinese colonists and Koreans from Manchuria and Japan.

North Korea maintained close relations with the Soviet Union and China (military aid treaties were signed with both countries in 1961) but preserved a degree of independence; the Sino-Soviet rift facilitated this. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China became North Korea's most important ally. The country made some strides toward its goal of self-sufficiency, but large expenditures on its military and centralized control have been drags on the economy.

Relations with the United States remained tense throughout the late 20th cent. because of the U.S. military presence in Korea and its economic assistance to South Korea. In 1968, North Korea seized the U.S. intelligence ship *Pueblo* and imprisoned its crew for 11 months, and in 1969 it shot down an American reconnaissance plane. More recently, the United States imposed (1988) sanctions on North Korea for alleged terrorist activity and expressed concern over reports that North Korea was building a nuclear weapons plant. In 1991 both Koreas joined the United Nations after the North dropped its opposition to such a move.

New tensions mounted on the peninsula in 1994 after confirmation that the country had developed a nuclear program. After direct talks with the United States, North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear program in return for shipments of oil and the construction of two new light-water reactors for power (the latter were not built, however). North Korea launched a medium-range missile over Japan in 1998; in 1999, the United States agreed to ease trade sanctions against the country in exchange for North Korea's agreement to suspend its missile testing. In a further easing of tensions, high-level visits by U.S. and North Korean officials were exchanged during 2000, and the South's president, Kim Dae Jung, paid a visit to the North. Relations were slow to improve, however, as the North increased its demands for economic aid while failing to fulfill its own pledges.

Continuing economic deterioration in the North led in 2002 to a number of reforms and plans for the establishment of special economic zones in Sinuiju and Kaesong. The North also was accused of attempting to earn hard currency through the illegal drug trade and the counterfeiting of U.S. currency; a North Korean cargo ship was seized by Australia in 2003 after the crew was observed unloading heroin. Moribund negotiations with South Korea and the United States were also revived, while talks with Japan led to an agreement to begin normalizing diplomatic relations. Late in 2002, however, oil shipments under the 1994 agreement were halted after revelations that North Korea had a nuclear weapons program; food aid was also reduced. An economically desperate North ended UN supervision of its nuclear facilities, withdrew from the nonproliferation treaty, and made other moves toward the development of nuclear weapons.

Tensions and concerns over the North's pursuit of nuclear weapons continued into 2005. Meanwhile, the United States indicated that it believed that the North had sold enriched uranium to Libya when the latter had been attempting to develop nuclear weapons, while Korea publicly acknowledged that it had nuclear weapons and later stated that it would increase its nuclear arsenal. In Sept., 2005, talks involving the Koreas, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia produced an agreement in which the North said it would abandon its nuclear programs and weapons in return for aid and security commitments. Ambiguities in the agreement, however, led the parties to contest its terms almost immediately when North Korea demanded that it be given a light-water reactor, but U.S. officials said that they had agreed only to discuss doing so (and only after the North had done what it had committed to do).

Also in 2005, the U.S. government imposed sanctions on a Macao bank accused of laundering North Korean earnings from illegal activities, including counterfeiting U.S. money. The move, which came after a four-year investigation and appeared to have been undertaken in part in attempt to force North Korea to make nuclear concessions, led other international banks to limit their transactions with North Korea. In 2006 North Korea called for the sanctions to be lifted before it would engage in further six-party negotiations.

In July, 2006, the North again launched several tests missiles, provoking international condemnation and drawing strong reactions from both the United States and Japan; the United Nations Security Council adopted some limited military sanctions in response. Then, in October, the North conducted a small underground nuclear test. Widely and strongly condemned internationally, including by China, the North's closest ally, the test resulted in additional, largely military sanctions. Japan and a number of other nations adopted more extensive sanctions, but China and South Korea, the North's largest trade partners, both largely avoided placing restrictions on trade, out of concern over a possible military confrontation or economic and political collapse in North Korea.

In Feb., 2007, resumed six-party negotiations led to an agreement that called for the North to shut down its reactor in 60 days in exchange for aid; implementation of the agreement was held up, however, by the North's insistence on regaining access to its funds in Macao, which did not occur until June. The agreement also called for additional aid when further denuclearization steps were achieved. Japan was not a party to the aid agreement because of

issues relating to the North's kidnapping of its citizens in the past.

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## South Korea

South Korea, officially Republic of Korea (2005 est. pop. 48,423,000), 38,022 sq mi (98,477 sq km), formally proclaimed on Aug. 15, 1948, has its capital at Seoul, the largest city. Busan, the second largest city, is the country's chief port, with an excellent natural harbor near the delta of the Nakdong River. Other important cities are Daegu and Incheon. South Korea is divided into nine provinces and seven independent metropolitan cities. Syngman Rhee, who had established a provisional Korean government in exile in 1919, was elected South Korea's first president in 1948.

Traditionally the agricultural region of the Korean peninsula, South Korea faced severe economic problems after partition. Attempts to establish an adequate industrial base were hampered by limited resources, particularly an acute lack of energy resources; most industry, prior to 1948, had been located in the North. War damage and the flood of refugees from North Korea further intensified the economic problem. The country depended upon foreign aid, chiefly from the United States, and the economy was characterized by runaway inflation, highly unfavorable trade balances, and mass unemployment.

The increasingly authoritarian rule of President Syngman Rhee, along with government corruption and injustice, added to the discontent of the people. The elections of Mar., 1960, in which Rhee won a fourth term, were marked by widespread violence, police brutality, and accusations by Rhee's opponents of government fraud. A student protest march in Apr., 1960, in which 125 students were shot down by the police, triggered a wave of uprisings across the country. The government capitulated, and Rhee resigned and went into exile.

Under the leadership of Dr. John M. Chang (Chang Myun), a new government was unable to correct the economic problems or maintain order, and in May, 1961, the South Korean armed forces seized power in a bloodless coup. A military junta under Gen. Park Chung Hee established tight control over civil freedoms, the press, and the economy, somewhat relaxing restrictions as its power solidified. Park was elected president in 1963, reelected in 1967, and, following a constitutional amendment permitting a third term, again in 1971.

Park's government was remarkably successful in fighting graft and corruption and in reviving the economy. Successive five-year economic development plans, first launched in 1962, brought dramatic changes. Between 1962 and 1972 manufacturing was established as a leading economic sector and exports increased dramatically. In Oct., 1972, President Park proclaimed martial law and dissolved the national assembly, asserting that such measures were necessary to improve South Korea's position in the reunification talks with North Korea. In Dec., 1972, President Park was elected to a new six-year term, under a revised constitution, by a national conference. In 1974, a Korean resident of Japan unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Park in Seoul, fatally wounding Park's wife.

A second assassination attempt on Park, in 1979, was successful, and he was succeeded by Choi Kyu-hah, who instituted military rule. After a period of internal turmoil, Chun Doo Hwan was elected president (1980). Reforms were made to shift power to the national assembly, and the country's dynamic, export-oriented economy continued to grow. Labor unrest and general dissatisfaction with the government, however, led South Korean leaders to draw up a new constitution in 1987, which mandated popular election of the president and a reduction of the presidential term to five years.

Roh Tae Woo, who was elected president and took office in 1988, fought rising inflation rates brought on by South Korea's growing economy. Roh attempted to improve relations with opposition politicians and with the North, also establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union (1990) and China (1992). In 1992, Kim Young Sam, a former opposition leader who had merged his party with Roh's, was elected president, becoming the first civilian to hold the office since the Korean War. President Kim launched a campaign to eliminate corruption and administrative abuse and began to encourage economic cooperation with the North.

In 1996 former presidents Chun and Roh were put on trial on corruption charges and also tried, with 14 former generals, on charges in connection with the 1979 coup following Park's death and the 1980 massacre of prodemocracy demonstrators in Gwangju (Kwangju). Both received prison sentences. Along with other Asian countries, South Korea experienced a financial crisis in late 1997, forcing it to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund.

In December, voters elected Kim Dae Jung, who had been a prodemocracy dissident during the country's period of military dictatorship, as South Korea's new president. The economy began to recover slowly from the effect of the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis in 1999, and economic reforms promoted sustained growth. Kim worked to open relations with the North, and in 2000 he traveled there for a historic meeting with Kim Jong Il. Subsequent progress in inter-Korean relations, however, was slow, leading many in the South to feel that too many concessions had been made.

Kim Dae Jung's government was hurt by a series of corruption scandals in 2001 and 2002, some of which involved the president's family. The government suffered further embarrassment in 2002 when two nominees for prime minister were rejected by the national assembly. Despite these setbacks, the ruling party's candidate for president, Roh Moo Hyun, won the election in Dec., 2002. Following the election, when North Korea moved to resume its nuclear weapons program, the South pursued a more conciliatory course than that of the United States, and strongly opposed any military action against the North.

A political party funding scandal in 2003 implicated the main South Korean parties and many businesses, but it was overshadowed in early 2004 by the impeachment of the president over a relatively minor election law violation, which involved his public support for the new Uri party (the president is required to be politically neutral). The impeachment, which also accused Roh of incompetence, was reversed by the Constitutional Court, which restored him to office in May. In the meantime, Prime Minister Goh Kun was acting president, and the Uri party gained a majority of the National Assembly seats in an April election that amounted to a repudiation by the public of the

impeachment. The election was the first in which a liberal party had won control of the South Korean legislature. Roh officially joined the party in May.

In Aug., 2004, Roh announced that executive and administrative functions of the government would be moved to a new capital carved from portions of Yeongi co. and Gongju city in South Chungcheong prov., with construction to begin in 2007 and the relocation to be completed by 2030. Intended to reduce Seoul's economic dominance and overcrowding, the proposal provoked constitutional challenges from its opponents. In October the constitutional court ruled that a referendum or a constitutional amendment would be required before the move could be made.

The South revealed in Aug. and Sept., 2004, that its scientists had twice conducted experiments to enrich nuclear materials. Although the amounts of enriched plutonium and uranium were small, the admissions were embarrassing internationally and did not help the campaign against the North's nuclear program. Relations with Japan were strained in early 2005 over the ownership of the Liancourt Rocks (a perennial source of friction) and over Japanese school history textbooks that downplayed Japan's actions during World War II.

The Uri party, which had been hit by a number of scandals and ministerial resignations since winning control of parliament, lost its narrow majority in that body in Mar., 2005. In Apr., 2006, Han Myung-Sook, a member of the Uri party, became the first woman to be elected prime minister of South Korea; real power in the South Korean government, however, resides with the president. Local elections in May, 2006, resulted in significant losses for the Uri party. After the North's nuclear test in Oct., 2006, South Korea imposed some sanctions and supported the UN-adopted military sanctions, but remained committed to its policy of engagement with the North and the significant economic trade involved. In early 2007, after the Uri party had suffered significant defections in the National Assembly Roh resigned from the party in an attempt to avoid further losses. Prime Minister Han resigned in March, and said she was considering running for president. In April a free-trade agreement was reached with the United States.

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