

Korea, South

Introduction

Background: Following World War II, a republic was set up in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula while a communist government was installed in the north. Between 1950 and 1953, US and other UN forces intervened to defend South Korea from North Korean attacks supported by the Chinese; an armistice was signed in 1953. Thereafter, South Korea achieved amazing economic growth, with per capita income rising to 13 times the level of North Korea. In 1997, the nation suffered a severe financial crisis from which it continues to make a solid recovery. South Korea has also maintained its commitment to democratize its political processes.

Geography

Location: Eastern Asia, southern half of the Korean Peninsula bordering the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea

Geographic coordinates: 37 00 N, 127 30 E

Map references: Asia

Area:

total: 98,480 sq km

land: 98,190 sq km

water: 290 sq km

Area - comparative: slightly larger than Indiana

Land boundaries:

total: 238 km

border countries: North Korea 238 km

Coastline: 2,413 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

continental shelf: not specified

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm; between 3 nm and 12 nm in the Korea Strait

Climate: temperate, with rainfall heavier in summer than winter

Terrain: mostly hills and mountains; wide coastal plains in west and south

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Sea of Japan 0 m

highest point: Halla-san 1,950 m

Natural resources: coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, hydropower potential

Land use:

arable land: 19%

permanent crops: 2%

permanent pastures: 1%

forests and woodland: 65%

other: 13% (1993 est.)

Irrigated land: 13,350 sq km (1993 est.)

Natural hazards: occasional typhoons bring high winds and floods; low-level seismic activity common in southwest

Environment - current issues: air pollution in large cities; water pollution from the discharge of sewage and industrial effluents; drift net fishing

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling

signed, but not ratified: Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol

People

Population: 47,470,969 (July 2000 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 22% (male 5,471,520; female 4,867,688)

15-64 years: 71% (male 17,155,401; female 16,662,227)

65 years and over: 7% (male 1,274,943; female 2,039,190) (2000 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.93% (2000 est.)

Birth rate: 15.12 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Death rate: 5.85 deaths/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.13 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.12 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 1.03 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.63 male(s)/female

total population: 1.01 male(s)/female (2000 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 7.85 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 74.43 years

male: 70.75 years

female: 78.54 years (2000 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.72 children born/woman (2000 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Korean(s)

adjective: Korean

Ethnic groups: homogeneous (except for about 20,000 Chinese)

Religions: Christian 49%, Buddhist 47%, Confucianist 3%, Shamanist, Chondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), and other 1%

Languages: Korean, English widely taught in junior high and high school

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 98%

male: 99.3%

female: 96.7% (1995 est.)

Government**Country name:**

conventional long form: Republic of Korea

conventional short form: South Korea

local long form: Taehan-min'guk

local short form: none

note: the South Koreans generally use the term "Han-guk" to refer to their country

abbreviation: ROK

Data code: KS

Government type: republic

Capital: Seoul

Administrative divisions: 9 provinces (do, singular and plural) and 6 special cities* (gwangyoksi, singular and plural); Cheju-do, Cholla-bukto, Cholla-namdo, Ch'ungch'ong-bukto, Ch'ungch'ong-namdo, Inch'on-gwangyoksi*, Kangwon-do, Kwangju-gwangyoksi*, Kyonggi-do, Kyongsang-bukto, Kyongsang-namdo, Pusan-gwangyoksi*, Soul-t'ukpyolsi*, Taegu-gwangyoksi*, Taejon-gwangyoksi*

Independence: 15 August 1945, date of liberation from Japanese colonial rule

National holiday: Liberation Day, 15 August (1945)

Constitution: 25 February 1988

Legal system: combines elements of continental European civil law systems, Anglo-American law, and Chinese classical thought

Suffrage: 20 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: President KIM Dae-jung (since 25 February 1998)

head of government: Prime Minister PAK Tae-chun (since 10 January 2000)

cabinet: State Council appointed by the president on the prime minister's recommendation

elections: president elected by popular vote for a single five-year term; election last held 18 December 1997 (next to be held by 18 December 2002); prime minister appointed by the president; deputy prime ministers appointed by the president on the prime minister's recommendation

election results: KIM Dae-jung elected president; percent of vote - KIM Dae-jung (NCNP) 40.3% (with ULD partnership), YI Hoe-chang (GNP) 38.7%, YI In-che (NPP) 19.2%

Legislative branch: unicameral National Assembly or Kukhoe (299 seats - starting with the April 2000 election the number of seats will be reduced to 273; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)

elections: last held 11 April 1996 (next to be held 13 April 2000)

election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NKP 139, NCNP 79, ULD 50, DP 15, independents 16; note - the distribution of seats as of January 2000 was as follows: GNP 130, MDP (former NCNP) 103, ULD 55, independents 11

Judicial branch: Supreme Court, justices are appointed by the president subject to the consent of the National Assembly

Economy

Economy - overview: As one of the Four Dragons of East Asia, South Korea has achieved an incredible record of growth. Three decades ago its GDP per capita was comparable with levels in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia. Today its GDP per capita is seven times India's, 13 times North Korea's, and comparable to the lesser economies of the European Union. This success through the late 1980s was achieved by a system of close government/business ties, including directed credit, import restrictions, sponsorship of specific industries, and a strong labor effort. The government promoted the import of raw materials and technology at the expense of consumer goods and encouraged savings and investment over consumption. The Asian financial crisis of 1997-99 exposed certain longstanding weaknesses in South Korea's development model, including high debt/equity

ratios, massive foreign borrowing, and an undisciplined financial sector. By 1999 it had recovered financial stability, turning a substantial decline in 1998 into strong growth in 1999. Seoul has also pressed the country's largest business groups to swap subsidiaries to promote specialization, and the administration has directed many of the mid-sized conglomerates into debt-workout programs with creditor banks. The major economic challenge for the next several years presumably is the maintenance of the pace of market reforms to restore the old growth pattern.

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$625.7 billion (1999 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 10% (1999 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$13,300 (1999 est.)

GDP - composition by sector:

agriculture: 5%

industry: 45%

services: 50% (1998 est.)

Population below poverty line: NA%

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: NA%

highest 10%: NA%

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 0.8% (1999 est.)

Labor force: 22 million (1998)

Labor force - by occupation: services and other 68%, mining and manufacturing 20%, agriculture, fishing, forestry 12% (1998)

Unemployment rate: 6.3% (1999 est.)

Budget:

revenues: \$68.9 billion

expenditures: \$82.3 billion, including capital expenditures of \$14.5 billion (1998)

Industries: electronics, automobile production, chemicals, shipbuilding, steel, textiles, clothing, footwear, food processing

Industrial production growth rate: 22% (1999 est.)

Electricity - production: 221.258 billion kWh (1998)

Electricity - production by source:

fossil fuel: 59.56%

hydro: 1.91%

nuclear: 38.51%

other: 0.02% (1998)

Electricity - consumption: 205.77 billion kWh (1998)

Electricity - exports: 0 kWh (1998)

Electricity - imports: 0 kWh (1998)

Agriculture - products: rice, root crops, barley, vegetables, fruit; cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs; fish

Exports: \$144 billion (f.o.b., 1999)

Exports - commodities: electronic products, machinery and equipment, motor vehicles, steel, ships; textiles, clothing, footwear; fish

Exports - partners: US 17%, Japan 9%, China 9%, Hong Kong 7%, Taiwan 4% (1998)

Imports: \$116 billion (c.i.f., 1999)

Imports - commodities: machinery, electronics and electronic equipment, oil, steel, transport equipment, textiles, organic chemicals, grains

Imports - partners: US 22%, Japan 18%, China 7%, Australia 5%, Saudi Arabia 5% (1998)

Debt - external: \$142 billion (1999)

Economic aid - recipient: \$NA

Currency: 1 South Korean won (W) = 100 chun (theoretical)

Exchange rates: South Korean won (W) per US\$1 - 1,130.32 (January 2000), 1,188.82 (1999), 1,401.44 (1998), 951.29 (1997), 804.45 (1996), 771.27 (1995)

Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications

Telephones - main lines in use: 23.1 million (1998)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 8.6 million (1998)

Telephone system: excellent domestic and international services
domestic: NA

international: fiber-optic submarine cable to China; the Russia-Korea-Japan submarine cable; satellite earth stations - 3 Intelsat (2 Pacific Ocean and 1 Indian Ocean) and 1 Inmarsat (Pacific Ocean region)

Radio broadcast stations: AM 106, FM 97, shortwave 6 (1999)

Radios: 47.5 million (1997)

Television broadcast stations: 121 (plus 850 repeater stations and the eight-channel American Forces Korea Network) (1999)

Televisions: 15.9 million (1997)

Internet Service Providers (ISPs): 11 (1999)

Transportation

Railways:

total: 6,240 km

standard gauge: 6,240 km 1.435-m gauge (525 km electrified) (1998 est.)

Highways:

total: 86,990 km

paved: 64,808 km (including 1,996 km of expressways)

unpaved: 22,182 km (1998 est.)

Waterways: 1,609 km; use restricted to small native craft

Pipelines: petroleum products 455 km; note - additionally, there is a parallel petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL) pipeline being completed

Ports and harbors: Chinhae, Inch'on, Kunsan, Masan, Mokp'o, P'ohang, Pusan, Tonghae-hang, Ulsan, Yosu

Merchant marine:

total: 461 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 5,093,620 GRT/8,100,634 DWT

ships by type: bulk 98, cargo 149, chemical tanker 39, combination bulk 4, container 53, liquified gas 13, multi-functional large load carrier 1, passenger 3, petroleum tanker 61, refrigerated cargo 26, roll-on/roll-off 4, specialized tanker 4, vehicle carrier 6 (1999 est.)

Airports: 103 (1999 est.)

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 67

over 3,047 m: 1

2,438 to 3,047 m: 18

1,524 to 2,437 m: 15

914 to 1,523 m: 13

under 914 m: 20 (1999 est.)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 36

over 3,047 m: 1

914 to 1,523 m: 3

under 914 m: 32 (1999 est.)

Heliports: 203 (1999 est.)

Notes to Visitors and Users:

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