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President Moon in New York

On Sept 23-26, President Moon attended the UN General Assembly meeting held in New York. He met with UN Secretary-General António Guterres and delivered a keynote speech during the Climate Action Summit pledging to double funding for Global Climate Fund (GCF) and host next year's P4G summit.¹

On Sept 23, President Moon met with US President Trump. During an hour-long meeting, the two heads of state discussed cooperation on North Korea and strengthening the ROK-US alliance. According to Seoul, the two sides reaffirmed their willingness to “transform their respective relationships with North Korea, end nearly 70 years of hostility, and establish a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.”² The Blue House expressed hopes of a third US-DPRK summit meeting and Kim Jong-un's visit to Busan during the Korea-ASEAN meeting in November.

Poland and Australia

President Moon held several meetings with heads of state on the sidelines of the UNGA. One of these meetings included a sitdown with President Andrzej Duda of Poland.³ The two sides emphasized bilateral ties in trade, people-to-people exchanges, and support for the Korean peace process. President Moon also met with the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.⁴ The two heads of state stressed the importance of cooperation on investment, trade, infrastructure, defense, and renewable energy.

Reform of the Prosecution Service?

Following the appointment of Cho Kuk as the new Minister of Justice, President Moon called upon Prosecutor General Yoon Seok-yeol to push ahead with the reform of the Prosecution Service. On Oct 2, Yoon announced some changes, including shutting down special corruption investigation units, suspending the private use of agency vehicles by employees, and reviewing practices related to subpoenas.⁵

Yoon is currently leading the investigation against Minister Cho, and has come under increasing pressure from both the Blue House and the ruling party.

The South Korean public appears split with

progressives holding demonstrations on Sept 28 and Oct 5. The progressives are demanding that the Prosecution Service end its investigation of Cho and his family. The conservative groups also held their demonstration on Oct 3, demanding that Cho and President Moon resign.⁶ Pundits are concerned that South Korea is becoming more polarized than ever.

North Korean SLBM

On Oct 2, South Korean military authorities announced that North Korea fired a Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) into the East Sea.⁷ The missile was launched from Wonsan and flew 450km with an altitude of 910km. The Blue House expressed grave concerns regarding the launch, but stated that “it is up to the UN Security Council to determine whether the launch has violated UN sanctions.”⁸ Japan and the US claim that the launch was not an SLBM, but a missile fired from the sea-based platform.⁹

Dokdo

On Sept 27, the Japanese government approved the 2019 defense white paper, which renewed Japan's claims to Dokdo. South Korea's Foreign Ministry lodged a formal complaint against the Japanese official. “The government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) strongly protests the Japanese government's unjust and repeated claims over Dokdo, an integral part of the ROK's territory in terms of history, geography and international law in the ‘Defense of Japan 2019’ released on September 27. The ROK calls for an immediate withdrawal of such claims,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Tokyo has laid its sovereignty claims to the islets in the white paper since 2005.¹⁰

Hyundai Motor Group

On Sept 23, the Hyundai Motor Group and Aptiv announced that they would be establishing a joint venture to develop autonomous vehicles. Each company will own a 50-percent stake in the joint venture. Hyundai will contribute USD 1.6 billion in cash and USD 0.4 billion in vehicle engineering services, R&D resources, and access to intellectual property. Aptiv will contribute its autonomous driving technology, intellectual property, and about 700 employees dedicated to the development of

autonomous driving solutions. Karl Iagnemma, president of Aptiv Autonomous Mobility, will lead the joint venture. Hyundai and Aptiv will each appoint an equal number of directors to the venture's board.¹¹

Samsung Electronics

Samsung Electronics has been selected by Japanese telecommunications operator KDDI to supply its 5G network solutions, along with Sweden's Ericsson and Finland's Nokia. Samsung will provide KDDI with USD 2 billion worth of 5G network equipment from 2019 to 2024.¹²

Export

According to preliminary data released by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) on Oct 1, the country's exports in Sept totaled USD 44.71 billion, down 11.7 percent from a year earlier. The country's export to the US and China dropped by 2.2 percent and

21.8 percent, respectively, due to the intensified US-China trade dispute. Outbound shipments to Japan also fell by 5.9 percent.¹³

Inflation

South Korea's Consumer Price Index (CPI) remained in the negative territory for two consecutive months. According to a report released by Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) on Oct 1, South Korea's consumer price in Sept fell by 0.4 percent from a year ago. This is a record low since the agency began compiling such data in 1965. However, Vice Finance Minister Kim Yong-beom dismissed fears of deflation, saying that "we are not experiencing deflation, where the consumer price level persistently falls for a long period."¹⁴

1 The Blue House:

[<https://www1.president.go.kr/articles/7232>]

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3 The Blue House:

[http://www.korea.kr/news/blueHouseView.do?newsId=148864964&call_from=rsslink]

4 <https://www1.president.go.kr/articles/7258>

5 "여권보다 더 센 윤석열 개혁...법조계 "조국 수사 놔두라는 것"," *중앙일보*, 2019년 10월 2일.

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7 "북한, 오늘 오전 SLBM 추정 미사일 발사," *YTN*, 2019년 10월 2일.

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12 "[단독]삼성, 日 5G 통신장비 거머쥘다...2조3500

억 공급 계약," *중앙일보*, 2019년 9월 30일.

13 "[속보] 산업부 '9월 수출 전년동기대비 11.7% 감소'," *세계일보*, 2019년 10월 1일.

14 "9월 물가 -0.4% 사상최저...정부 '디플레이션 아니다' 낙관론," *중앙일보*, 2019년 10월 1일.

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