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2025

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Window into Overseas Koreans



Overseas Korean of the Month - 'Korean American Donation King' Hong Myung-ki
Special Feature - 23rd World Korean Business Convention
Policy Spotlight - OKA wins grand prize in 14th Korean Association for Policy Studies
in 'Policy Empathy' category
'Overseas compatriots are assets of Republic of Korea and provide
solution for population decline and local depopulation'
'Global Hansang Economic Zone' themed Overseas Koreans Policy
Academic Conference a great success



April's Overseas Korean of the Month
'Korean American Donation King' Hong Myung-ki

Cultivating Koryo-in identity through Hangeul

The Koryo-in migration history spans 160 years and is closely related to the anti-Japanese independence movement. The name Koryo-in originated in the early days of migration and is still used today. In the 1860s, when poor farmers in the Joseon Dynasty were struggling to make ends meet due to crop failures, they left their hometowns and began migrating to the neighboring Russian Maritime Province (Primorsky Krai), calling themselves Koryo-in.

During the Japanese colonial period, Koreans migrated to the area in large numbers to escape Japanese exploitation, and hundreds of thousands of Koryo-in lived in the Maritime Province in the 1920s. However, the Koryo people, whose sovereignty was robbed by Japan, became stateless people without a homeland and suffered much oppression.

In 1928, poet Jo Myeong-hee published a famous anti-Japanese resistance poem titled “Trampled Koryo” in the famous Korean language newspaper Seonbong, which was published by Koryo people in Vladivostok. As a result, the term “Koryo-in” became widely known, independence awareness was greatly heightened, and Primorsky Krai became an outpost for the anti-Japanese independence movement.

In 1937, the Soviet Union’s forced migration policy under Stalin was a great suffering for the Koryo people. Stalin forcibly relocated 170,000 of them from the Maritime Province to Central Asia, fearing they would cooperate with Japan, which was hostile to the Soviet Union at the time. Koryo people were deported without any compensation, reduced to an enemy ethnic group and banned from holding public office. Stalin prohibited Koryo people from using Hangeul and forced them to use Russian.

However, Koryo people, with their unwavering will and sincerity, established the Koryo Association, preserved Hangeul, “hanbok” and traditions, and maintained their Korean identity. Above all, Koryo people have a strong sense of pride in being descendants of anti-Japanese independence fighters, and Gen. Hong Beom-do, an independence fighter who came to the end of his life in Kazakhstan, was the spiritual pillar of Koryo people.

Hangeul played a key role in maintaining the identity of Koryo



Song Geum-yeong,
visiting scholar at Seoul National University Asia
Center (former South Korean ambassador to
Tanzania)

people for the past 160 years. Despite difficult conditions, such as censorship by the Soviet Communist Party, Koryo people continued to publish Hangeul newspapers, such as the Haejo Shinmun (1908), Seonbong (1923) and Lenin Gichi (1938). In 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved, and 15 countries, including Russia and Central Asian countries, became independent. Koryo people living in Kazakhstan changed the name of the Lenin Gichi newspaper to Koryo Ilbo in 1991 and reemphasized their identity as Koryo people after 120 years of immigration.

The Hangeul newspaper provided a space for literary works to be published, and many Koryo writers were able to debut through these

papers. After Stalin’s death, the Soviet government’s discrimination and censorship against the Koryo people were eased, and Koryo writers’ literary collections were published, allowing Koryo literature to develop more creatively. Currently, the third and fourth generations of Koryo people are entering the mainstream, experiencing a complex identity and confusion of values. The fourth generation born after the collapse of the former Soviet Union has a strong individualistic tendency and different values from the third generation, who experienced Soviet communism. In addition, there are differences in national identity. These include Korea as a historical homeland, the socialist Soviet Union where they lived as a minority, a sense of belonging to the country they currently live in, and ideological conflicts due to the conflict between South and North Korea.

Recently, the Koryo people have been showing great interest in their native language and are increasingly immigrating to Korea. Hangeul will continue to play an important role in helping Koryo-saram overcome the confusion of values in a multicultural society and maintain their Korean identity.

First, the Korean government needs to expand the number of visits to their home country for Koryo people, actively support Hangeul education and cultivate more Koryo literature. In addition, the treatment of the 110,000 Koryo people residing in Korea needs to be improved so that they can reside stably without discrimination. 🇰🇷



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This magazine can also be viewed at <http://webzine.korean.net>

Hong Myung-ki, 'Korean American King of Donations' **Drove development of overseas Korean business network,** **erected statue of Ahn Chang-ho, led scholarship programs for** **next generation** **California state legislature establishes 'Hong Myung-ki Day'**



Former Chairman Hong Myung-ki, the "Korean American King of Donations," is the OKA's Overseas Korean of the Month for April.

The Overseas Koreans Agency has named Hong Myung-ki (1934-2021), former chairman of the M&L Hong Foundation (formerly known as the Bright Future Foundation), the Overseas Korean of the Month for April 2025.

A successful Korean American entrepreneur who is often referred to as the "Godfather of the world's overseas Korean merchants," Hong supported the preservation of the history of the independence movement for Koreans living in the United States, including the construction of a statue of Dosan Ahn Chang-ho and the restoration of the Korean National Association building, as well as supporting education and scholarship programs for the next generation of Korean Americans.

Born in Seoul in 1934 and graduating from Jungang High School, Hong immigrated to the United States in 1954, and despite the

difficulties of earning his own tuition and living expenses, he did not give up on his education and graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) with a degree in chemistry, after which he was employed by a paint company.

For the next 22 years, he worked as a researcher at the Whittaker Company, rising through the ranks to become a senior researcher and laboratory director. However, he felt limited by racial discrimination as he struggled to get promoted due to his ethnicity, and in 1986, at the age of 51, he founded Dura Coat Products, a specialty paint company for industrial and architectural applications.

Although he faced many difficulties in the early years of his business, through relentless research and development, he grew Dura Coat into the No. 1 company in U.S. market share with annual sales of US\$300 million within 30 years and became a representative giant of the American dream.

His story of starting a business at such a late age and realizing the American dream has deeply touched and inspired many people. Moreover, his experience of facing racial discrimination was an important factor that led him to develop a deep love and commitment to the Korean American community beyond mere business success.

After visiting LA during the riots of 1992 and witnessing the lack of a leader who could speak up for the Korean American community, he decided to use his business success to give back to the Korean American community.

Giving back to Korean community through over \$15 million in assets

In 2001, he established a foundation with \$10 million to support the improvement of the rights of Korean Americans.

He was particularly impressed by the spirit of independence activist Dosan Ahn Chang-ho, who emphasized national revolution through education, and donated \$150,000 to build a statue of him to foster the national spirit and raise the pride of the next generation.

His donation was followed by donations from the Korean community and support from the Korean government, which totaled about \$600,000, and in 2001, the Dosan Ahn Chang-Ho Memorial was erected across from the statue of Dr. Martin Luther King in front

of Riverside City Hall. The statue has become a monument of educational value that is visited by groups of Korean American students.

In 2002, Hong also pushed for the naming of the interchange (IC) between the 10 and 110 freeways that run east and west through Los Angeles as the Dosan Ahn Chang Ho IC. With the support of the California state government and the state legislature, four interchanges in the area were designated as Dosan Ahn Chang Ho ICs, which helped raise the profile of the Korean American community.

He also served as the president of the Dosan Ahn Chang-ho Memorial Association in America for many years, helping to spread Ahn's spirit. His efforts have been recognized as not only a donation but also a significant contribution to raising the national pride of the Korean American community in the U.S.

In 2003, when the Korean National Association building, the headquarters of the Korean independence movement in the U.S., was facing demolition due to deterioration, he served as the chair of the restoration project and played a leading role in raising funds to help the building become a historical museum and educational venue. This is a prime example of his deep commitment to preserving the historical roots of the Korean community in the U.S. and passing on its meaning to future generations.

In addition, Hong emphasized the importance of educating the next generation of Korean Americans and chaired the board of the Korean Institute of Southern California, which was in danger of closing, raising \$3 million, including a \$200,000 donation from himself, and contributing significantly to the school's revitalization. His efforts to save the Southern California Korean Institute, the only Korean educational institution and formal Korean primary school in the Americas, demonstrate his deep interest and investment in future generations.

After selling the paint company he founded, he donated \$2.56 million to fund the Korean American Museum, as well as \$2 million and \$1 million to UCLA and La Sierra College in East Los Angeles, respectively. He also pledged \$370,000 to the Young Oak Kim Center for Korean American Studies, named after U.S. Army Col. Kim Young-oak, a World War II and Korean War hero.

His philanthropic endeavors continued in his homeland. In 2015, he served as the first chairman of the Global Hansang Dream, an organization established by overseas Korean businesspeople to foster the next generation of talent, and donated \$100,000 to support scholarships and overseas employment for young Koreans, as well as \$1 million to Sahmyook University for postgraduate training in chemistry. His donations go beyond mere monetary support and demonstrate his deep interest in fostering the next generation of talent. He has also spearheaded scholarship programs



A statue of Dr. Dosan Ahn Chang-ho in Riverside, California, U.S., built with the support of the Korean government and donations from the Korean community, including former Chairman Hong Myung-ki

for children from marginalized groups, including North Korean defectors and multicultural families.

Founding member of World Korean Business Convention

As a founding member of the World Korean Business Convention (formerly the World Korean Merchants Convention), Hong served as the president of the 12th convention in 2013 and as the chairman of the Hansang Leading CEO Forum, making a significant contribution to the development of the Global Korean Business Network.

He continued his contributions to his country and the Korean community until his passing in August 2021 at the age of 87, including a donation of 500 million won for the land on which to build the Overseas Korean Education and Culture Center in early 2021. Being honored as the Overseas Korean of the Month after his passing confirms the profound impact his life has left on Korean society and the overseas Korean community. His dedication and sharing spirit will continue to resonate in our society for many years to come.

In recognition of his contributions, the South Korean government awarded him the Camellia Medal of the National Order of Merit in 2002 and the Mugunghwa Medal of the National Order of Merit in 2011, and in 2022, the California State Legislature unanimously passed a resolution to establish June 20, his birthday, as "Hong Myung-ki Day."

"Mr. Hong's donations and sponsorships went beyond mere financial support and played an important role in strengthening the roots of the Korean American community in the United States and transmitting the spirit of the independence movement and its historical values to the next generation," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. "In honor of his contributions as a role model for the global Korean business community, we selected him as the Overseas Korean of the Month in April, the month of the 23rd World Korean Business Convention." 장

‘Successful completion’ with US\$49.9 million worth of contracts signed with U.S. parties

Formation of consensus on ‘establishing global Korean economic zone’ to respond to global economic crisis

The 23rd World Korean Business Convention (WKBC), held in Atlanta, U.S., from April 17-20, successfully concluded with a closing ceremony and farewell luncheon.

This convention was hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency and the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA, and co-hosted by Maeil Business Newspaper, MBN, the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises (K-BIZ) and the Korean American Chamber of Commerce (Georgia-Atlanta).

During this convention, \$660 million in consultations were made over the four days, and of this, \$49.9 million in on-site contracts were signed, focusing on K-food and K-beauty products, reaffirming the popularity of Korean Wave products in the United States.

The analysis is that the strategy of organizing corporate exhibitions specializing in K-bio, K-beauty and K-food, fueled by the popularity of the global Korean Wave, was effective. Two beauty companies, M and A, which participated in the competition, signed export contracts worth millions of dollars with Home Shopping World, the largest Korean shopping mall in the U.S.

During a time when tariff barriers, such as recent retaliatory tariffs in the U.S., have increased, the fact that our small and medium-sized enterprises, following in the path of large corporations, have also begun to invest in the U.S. market in earnest also drew much attention at the convention.

G2G program to strengthen economic cooperation between Korea and U.S.

On the second day of the event, two domestic companies (Company D and Company H) signed local factory construction contracts worth \$25 million and \$20 million, respectively, with an architectural firm headquartered in Atlanta.

The signing of 86 MOUs between domestic Korean companies and overseas companies worth \$150 million is also considered one of the major achievements of this convention. In particular, domestic startup Company S, which participated in the startup pitching competition held April 18, attracted attention by signing a



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers a farewell speech at the closing ceremony of the 23rd World Korean Business Convention held at the Gas South Convention Center in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., on April 20.

letter of intent to attract investment worth about 10 billion won with a Korean American investment company. This case showed that the startup program of the WKBC is not just a simple competition but is functioning as a practical platform for entering the global market.

The 23rd WKBC is the second event held in the United States after the 2023 Anaheim Convention. Approximately 4,000 overseas Korean businesspeople from around the world and domestic businesspeople participated in the convention, and 20,000 general visitors visited the corporate exhibition hall, which was at the center of the convention.

This convention, above all else, sloganized, “Leap forward to the global Korean economic zone.” Minister of SMEs and Startups Oh Young-joo and Commissioner of the U.S. Small Business Administration Kelly Loeffler, representing small and medium-sized enterprises from both Korea and the U.S., attended the opening ceremony and held a ceremony declaring 2025 as the “First Year of the Hansang Economic Zone,” which received enthusiastic applause from the attendees. Hansang means Korean merchants.

The concept of the Hansang Economic Zone concept is to unite compatriots and domestic entrepreneurs into a “Hansang Economic Zone” and use it as a platform to overcome the global



Key participants celebrate at the opening ceremony of the 23rd World Korean Business Convention at the Gas South Convention Center in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. on April 17. The event was hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency and the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA, among others.

economic crisis by promoting production, consumption, investment, human resource movement and supply chain construction.

At the luncheon forum held April 18 under the theme of “Establishing the Hansang Economic Zone,” Sung Kim, president of Hyundai Motor Company, drew attention as the keynote speaker.

“The ROK-U.S. relationship, which started as an alliance during the war, is now developing into a dynamic economic and strategic alliance based on trust,” Kim said.

“This investment reflects our belief in America’s potential and our confidence in the strength of the Korea-U.S. relationship. We have witnessed firsthand the depth, resilience and potential of our mutual alliance.”

Hyundai Motor Group also announced it would invest \$21 billion in the U.S. by 2028.

Furthermore, the state of Georgia is known as the largest base for domestic expansion into the U.S., with Hyundai Motor Company recently completing its largest finished vehicle plant and over 150 leading domestic companies operating there, adding to the significance of the event.

Bids for startup investment also continued

At this forum, there was a consensus that in order to respond to President Donald Trump’s administration’s recent increased trade pressure, such as the expansion of reciprocal tariffs, it is more urgent than ever to build a “Hansang Economic Zone” that connects the Korean merchant networks scattered around the world into a single economic community.

The U.S. state of Georgia, where this event was held, is one of our country’s largest investment bases in the U.S. and is a symbol of cooperation between Korea and the U.S. Based on this symbolism, it is evaluated as having great significance in that it also provided a venue for various discussions to seek ways to expand mutual investment and trade between Korean local governments


and U.S. state governments.

In particular, the G2G forum, held April 17, was attended by vice ministers and ministers from the South Korean Ministry of SMEs and Startups, provincial governments of North Chungcheong Province and North Jeolla Province, and aT (Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation) on the Korean side, and Maryland, Arkansas and Alabama on the U.S. side. The participants shared regional investment attraction strategies and success stories of both countries and explored ways to cooperate to foster key industries between local governments, thereby creating an opportunity to open a new chapter of cooperation between local governments of both countries.

The closing ceremony on April 20 included a screening of the highlights of the event, an awards ceremony for the startup competition and a farewell luncheon, concluding the official schedule of the event.

“Thanks to the passionate preparations and dedication of the co-hosts and organizers, including the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA and the Korea Federation of SMEs, among others, we were able to conclude this event with tangible results centered on hallyu products,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. “I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your hard work.”

“Through this event, the Korean business Hansang network will go beyond simple exchanges to become a Hansang economic zone and advance to a global economic community that embraces Korean businesses in Korea and around the world,” he said. “Various networking programs have also led to active exchanges between personnel from both Korea and the United States, and it was a meaningful time to reaffirm the strong Korea-U.S. alliance.”

The OKA is being evaluated as having played a major role in this year’s convention. Lee meticulously managed the schedule at the event venue throughout the event period and actively interacted with the Korean business community. It is also reported that the OKA staff worked hard to ensure the success of the event, even foregoing sleep. 



Participants at the G2G Forum wave their hands at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta, U.S., on April 17. Clockwise from the center of the table in the middle of the front row: Alabama Undersecretary of Commerce Ed Castile, Maryland Undersecretary of Commerce Stephen Rice, Ministry of SMEs and Startups SME Policy Office Director Noh Yong-seok, North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan, Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA Chairman Lee Kyung-chul, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, aT CEO Hong Moon-pyo, Arkansas Secretary of Commerce Hugh McDonald and Jeonbuk Economic Promotion Agency Director Yoon Yeo-bong.

G2G forum held with participation of local governments from Korea and U.S.

Discussion on strengthening economic cooperation between Korea and USA
U.S. state governments compete to attract Korean companies

A forum was set up at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention held in Atlanta, U.S., to discuss ways to expand mutual investment and trade between Korean local governments and local governments in the U.S.

The G2G Forum held on the first day of the convention on April 17 was attended by key figures from Korean local governments and related organizations, including North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan, Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation (aT) CEO Hong Moon-pyo, the Ministry of SMEs and Startups SME Policy Director Noh Yong-seok, and Jeonbuk Trade and Economic Promotion Agency President Yoon Yeo-bong.

On the U.S. side, government and chamber of commerce officials from about 10 states, including the undersecretaries of commerce of Maryland, Arkansas, Alabama, New York, Georgia, Florida and Texas, attended the forum to share regional investment attraction strategies and success stories and explore cooperation measures for fostering key industries between local governments.

The G2G Forum is a core program of the convention, where key figures from the Korean and U.S. governments present on the topic

of promoting Korea-U.S. investment and trade.

First, North Chungcheong Province and North Jeolla Province presented regional key industries and innovative cases for securing global competitiveness, while the Ministry of SMEs and Startups and aT Corp. introduced Korea's SME support strategy and efforts to globalize K-Food, respectively.

High-ranking officials from 10 U.S. states attended

"I hope that many people from around the world who gathered in Atlanta will visit and invest in North Chungcheong Province, and I ask for your interest and love," North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan said.

AT CEO Hong Moon-pyo said, "I believe that this event will be a valuable opportunity for economic cooperation and development between Korea and the U.S."

Yoon Yeo-bong, director of the Jeonbuk Province Economic and Trade Promotion Agency, emphasized, "We must go beyond simple collaboration to create tangible business results through joint technology development, joint marketing and joint market

entry.”

Following this, key figures from U.S. state governments introduced their special ties with Korea and suggested the possibility of cooperation with Korean companies to create synergy in cutting-edge technology industries, such as aerospace, secondary batteries and semiconductors.

“It was truly a blessing that Hyundai Motor Company built a manufacturing plant in Alabama 20 years ago,” Alabama Deputy Secretary of Commerce Ed Castile said. “Currently, more than 4,000 employees are working here, and there are over 38,000 direct and indirect employees related to Hyundai Motor Co. One of Alabama’s strengths is its excellent Korean community. Last year, 15 Korean companies joined four Alabama counties. We are ready to help companies in Alabama become your business partners, and if there is an opportunity to discuss this during this convention, we will do so.”

Great blessing of Hyundai plant in Alabama

Maryland Deputy Secretary of Commerce Stephen Rice, who gave a greeting in Korean, said, “We are proud to be a growing partner with Korea. Broad trade between Maryland and Korea will reach \$1.7 billion in 2023.

“The three areas in which Maryland is investing heavily are life sciences technology, cybersecurity and aerospace, focusing on quantum and artificial intelligence, which are also very large industries in Korea, so there will be synergy effects. The Maryland governor is working to further strengthen the friendship between Korea and the United States. We are working to promote mutually beneficial economic ties and expand opportunities for shared prosperity.”

Arkansas Secretary of Commerce Hugh McDonald expressed his affinity for Korea in noting that Gen. Douglas MacArthur, a Korean War hero, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, and that the

headquarters of the United States Taekwondo Association is located in Arkansas.

Fernanda Figueiredo, vice president of Select Florida, the state’s official trade and investment promotion agency, said, “Korea is Florida’s sixth-largest trading partner, but it is the 27th largest in terms of foreign direct investment, so there is a lot of potential for growth.

“Following our trip in 2023, we are planning a follow-up leadership visit to Korea this October to develop trade and business. It’s early days, but we are very excited to take business leaders from Florida’s higher education, sports and other stakeholders to Korea.”

Arkansas, home state of Gen. MacArthur, Korean War hero

This year’s convention in Atlanta was an opportunity to respond to the trade pressures of the second U.S. President Donald Trump administration but also for strengthening economic cooperation between Korea and the USA.

Following the G2G forum, a B2G forum was held with Korean companies and US state government officials on April 18, as well as a 1:1 meeting to discuss specific cooperation plans between the two sides.

“At a time when Korea-U.S. cooperation is more important than ever, the World Korean Business Convention in Georgia, the largest investment destination for Korean companies in the U.S., has diversified communication channels between the two countries, and this has created new momentum for economic cooperation between Korea and the U.S.,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. “I hope that today’s forum will be an opportunity to share investment attraction cases in each region and further expand mutual investment and cooperation in key new industries.” 장



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (7th from L) and other key attendees pose for a commemorative photo ahead of the G2G Forum at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta, U.S., on April 17.

OKA takes first step in discussion to ‘establish global Hansang Korean economic zone’

Various strategies presented at Leading CEO Forum for establishing Hansang economic zone



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th from L, front row), Kim Ki-moon (7th from L, front row) and other participants wave their hands at the opening ceremony of the Leading CEO Forum at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., on April 19.

The Leading CEO Forum was held April 18 at the Gas South Convention Center in Atlanta, U.S., where the 23rd World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) was held, under the theme of “Establishing a Hansang Economic Zone,” referring to Korean global merchants.

The Leading CEO Forum, a gathering of successful overseas Korean businesspeople, is an advisory body for the convention that was launched in 2002 on the occasion of the 1st World Korean Hansang Convention (now the World Korean Business Convention). Its purpose is to provide advice on the overall Korean economy and foster the next generation of overseas Korean businesspeople.

In this forum, not only the leading CEO members but also the convention management committee, YBLN (Young Business Leaders Network) and the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group, as well as other key members of the WKBC, participated and discussed the future direction of the global Hansang network.

YBLN is a gathering of next-generation Korean businesspeople, formed in 2002 as the Next Generation Economic Leaders Forum, and consists of 199 people from 35 countries.

The Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK Biz) is a business advisory group of overseas Korean businesspeople launched by the Overseas Koreans Agency in 2024 to support exports of domestic small and medium-sized enterprises.

“We emphasize the importance of the special alliance and economic cooperation between Korea and the United States, and that the two countries stand together as partners in global innovation and sustainable growth,” said Hyundai Motor Company President Sung Kim, who was invited as a keynote speaker. “Let’s create a future together that turns uncertainty into possibility based on a common vision and sense of responsibility.”

In a presentation titled “The Role of Hansang in Responding to Global Economic Changes,” Lee Geum-ha, director of the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) North American Headquarters, emphasized: “In order to respond to the Trump administration’s increased trade pressure, such as the expansion of reciprocal tariffs, it is more important than ever to discuss establishing a Hansang Economic Zone that connects the Korean merchant networks scattered around the world into a single economic community. This will establish a new foundation for



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (5th from R) and other key figures cut the ribbon at the Corporate Exhibition of the 23rd World Korean Business Convention held at the Gas South Convention Center in Atlanta on April 17.

cooperation that goes beyond protectionism and enhances the global competitiveness of our companies.”

Next, Lee Jin-young, a professor at Inha University, presented on “Measures to activate domestic investment by overseas Koreans.” Lee predicted that if overseas Korean businesspeople who have succeeded internationally make substantial contributions to the Korean economy by promoting domestic investment, the foundation for establishing a Hansang Economic Zone will be established. Lee proposed specific measures to create an investment environment, such as tax reforms, benchmarking similar overseas cases, such as Israel and Vietnam, and changing domestic perceptions of overseas Koreans.

In his welcoming speech, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk emphasized: “In order to proactively respond to unpredictable crises in the rapidly changing global economic environment, domestic and overseas Korean companies around the world must unite their capabilities as one. It is very timely that discussions on the Hansang Economic Zone, which will serve as a platform for uniting such capabilities, have begun at this point. I hope that this forum will serve as a starting point for establishing a practical foundation for cooperation between overseas Korean and domestic companies, and for presenting a new vision as a Korean economic community.”

Meanwhile, veteran Korean businesspeople who gathered from around the world to attend the eve of the event generously shared advice for discovering such next-generation leader cases. They held a shared opinion about the importance of the Hansang economic zone. The Hansang economic zone means domestic and overseas Korean businesses coming together to unite as one global economic zone. The purpose is to freely realize not only trade but also investment and supply chain construction within the common economic zone and to together overcome the global economic crisis, which is causing so much uncertainty.

An exemplary case of creating a Hansang economic zone is the

collaboration between Han Oh-dong, the chair of the Atlanta Georgia Korean Chamber of Commerce, and outdoor gear specialist Kolping. Han, who was running a beauty shop in Atlanta, signed a contract with Kolping as a distributor in the United States at the WKBC held in Orange County, California, two years ago, making it the first case of official business matching. Kolping opened its first store in the United States in Duluth, Atlanta, in September 2023 and is preparing to expand throughout the United States from there.


“K-culture is popular in the United States as well, so we are promoting Kolping by branding it K-cloth,” Han said. “At a time when all businessmen are having difficulties due to tariffs, Korean merchants around the world should help each other and exchange information.”

The first generation of Hansang (global Korean merchants) is anticipating the greater synergy created by the collaboration with younger Hansang.

“If senior Korean merchants help connect networks around the world, the next generation of leaders will be created naturally,” World Federation of Korean Associations President Ko Sang-goo emphasized. “Full support for this must be provided.”

Park Seon-geun, the president of the Korea-America Friendship Association, urged the younger generation of Hansang to “keep their center” in a situation where it is difficult to see even an inch ahead.

“The path of a Hansang is like driving a car,” Park said. “If you only focus on the obstacles in front of you, you can easily get lost on the world stage, so you should try not to lose your broader perspective.”

In response to the advice of the first generation of Hansang, North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan said in his congratulatory speech, “Hansang are the people who created and protected the Republic of Korea,” and promised active support from the regional government. 

K-startups take to global stage

Proving global unicorn potential at 23rd World Korean Business Convention



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th from L) takes a commemorative photo with the winners of the K-Startup Competition after holding the awards ceremony during the closing ceremony of the WKBC held in Atlanta, U.S., on April 20.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) announced that the 23rd World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) Startup Competition, held at Magnolia Hall in the Gas South Convention Center in Atlanta, U.S., concluded with huge success on April 18.

The Startup Competition, which has been promoted as a core program of the convention since 2022, provides an opportunity for promising domestic startups to take the global stage. This year, about 200 startups participated in the preliminary round for participation in the Atlanta convention, and 20 domestic startup teams in cutting-edge fields, such as AI, batteries, bio and robotics, advanced to the final round and gave presentations online and offline.

The participating teams competed fiercely with 10 minutes each to present, showcasing their innovative technologies and global market entry strategies. In particular, many solutions aimed at solving practical problems in various industries were introduced, receiving positive responses from on-site attendees and judges.

As a result of the judging, the first place in the offline presentation group was awarded to EverEx, a digital health care company that introduced AI-based rehabilitation and correction solutions. The first place in the online presentation group was awarded to Morphing I, a company that stood out in the AI and IoT fields for introducing the

Morphing Bot, a smart inspection robot that detects defects in water pipes using AI and multiple sensors.

The judging panel, which consisted of local venture capitalists (VCs), selected the companies for excellence through a comprehensive evaluation of ▲ Technological innovation, ▲ Marketability, ▲ Market entry strategy and ▲ Global growth potential. The winning companies will be awarded prize money, along with a plaque. The first- and second-place winners of the offline presentation group were awarded the OKA Commissioner's Award, and the first- and second-place winners of the online presentation group were awarded the Minister of SMEs and Startups Award, while the third-place winners of the online and offline presentation groups were awarded the Korea Federation of SMEs Award.

"The startup competition is an important venue for startups with new technologies and ideas to challenge themselves to enter the global market," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk emphasized. "The potential of Hansang will be maximized as our young and innovative startups participate in the network."

Meanwhile, the 23rd WKBC was attended by approximately 4,000 Korean businesspeople from 26 countries around the world, and various programs, such as the G2G Forum, corporate exhibition, startup competition and 1:1 business meeting, were held. 🇰🇷

Training seminar for Hangeul school teachers, students, parents held for first time in U.S.

OKA Commissioner Lee: 'I hope this will be beginning of new Hangeul school education that is in step with digital age'



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (5th from L, front row) takes a commemorative photo with participants at the "Hangeul school capacity building training with the OKA," which was held in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., from April 18-20.

The first capacity building training session for not only Hangeul school teachers but also students and parents was held in Atlanta, U.S.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) held the "Hangeul school capacity building training with the OKA" in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., from April 18-20.

This training session, held in cooperation with the southeastern council of the National Association of Korean Schools (NAKS) (Chair Noh Si-hyun), was attended by approximately 210 people, including 110 teachers from Hangeul schools in the southeastern region, 60 students and 40 parents.

NAKS is a nonprofit organization established in 1981 and has 14 regional councils, including the Southeastern Council, overseeing over 1,000 Hangeul schools.

Although the OKA has held training sessions for teachers in the past, this is the first time that it has directly visited local schools to conduct demonstration classes and lectures for students and parents.

This training session consisted of programs for teachers, special lectures for parents and demonstration classes for elementary,

middle and high school students. The teacher training session was held April 18 at the Avalon Hotel Conference Center in Atlanta. Teachers attended lectures, such as "An inside look into a good class" and "Expressing from vocabulary to paragraphs in one breath." They also participated in a workshop on the topic of "Strategy-centered teaching and designing and implementing learning methods."

"I hope this training session will provide new learning and inspiration to Hangeul school teachers," Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, who attended the training session in person, said in a congratulatory speech. "As this is the first time that the OKA has held a Hangeul school community training session created together with teachers, students and parents, we will not forgo any new attempts and offer full support in the future."

The OKA plans to continue to promote training programs that can enhance the capacity of the Hangeul school educational community by visiting local Hangeul schools in person to provide teachers with practical teaching methods, provide students with special educational experiences and share in shaping the direction of children's identity education through special lectures for parents. 📺

‘Opening the way for exports for small and medium-sized enterprises’

Local buyers flock to corporate exhibition

400 companies in K-beauty, bio, food, health, etc. focus on business meetings

The Corporate Exhibition, which helps small and medium-sized businesses develop overseas markets and exports, was held from April 17-19 as the flagship program of the World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) held at the Georgia World Convention Center in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.

About 400 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Korea set up booths at this corporate exhibition. Major categories included K-beauty, K-food, K-bio, K-health care and IT.

The opening ceremony was attended by Minister of SMEs and Startups Oh Young-joo, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, Chair of the Korea Federation of SMEs Kim Ki-moon, North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan, Deputy Governor of Economic Affairs Park Chang-hwan of South Jeolla Province and Consul General of Houston Jeong Young-ho.

“The economic network of compatriots through the establishment of the ‘Hansang Economic Zone’ will contribute to expanding exchanges between the home country and the country of residence,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said in a press conference before the opening ceremony. “I hope that this convention will serve as a venue for strengthening Korea-U.S. relations and as an opportunity to overcome the global economic crisis.

“We expect to achieve good results because we organized the exhibition centered on K-food, beauty and bio, which are attracting attention overseas due to the Korean Wave.”

Lee Kyung-chul, the president of the co-hosting organization Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA, said: “About 500 Korean businesses and local buyers interested in excellent Korean SME products visited the exhibition hall. We will focus on supporting Korean companies with their entry into the U.S. market and their partnerships.”

Local government booths were set up for the corporate exhibition, including Incheon metropolitan city, Daegu metropolitan city, South Jeolla Province and North Chungcheong Province, and the SME Administration and Small Business Corp. (organizations under the Ministry of SMEs and Startups) also opened booths to promote their member companies.



Key figures taste products at the SME product exhibition booth after the opening of the Corporate Exhibition, the flagship program of the World Korean Business Convention held in Atlanta, U.S., on April 17. From left to right are North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan, actor Jung Joon-ho, SMEs and Startups Minister Oh Young-joo, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk and Korea Federation of SMEs Chairman Kim Ki-moon.

Incheon, which has set out to promote itself as a city friendly to overseas Koreans, had 24 companies participate, and companies affiliated with the Korea Federation of SMEs and the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation also set up booths.

SMEs and Startups Minister Oh and Commissioner Lee, as well as other key figures, toured the exhibition hall, listening to explanations about products from SMEs and even tasting food at the food booth.

Actor Jung Joon-ho, who participated in the event as a public relations ambassador, said, “I will do my best to promote Korean products through good movies and dramas. Please show a lot of interest in the World Korean Business Convention.”

The organizers also set up a 1:1 business meeting space at the very back of the corporate exhibition hall for efficient consultations between participating companies and buyers.

“Most of the buyers who participated in the convention were those with actual purchasing decision-making capabilities, and they expressed their interest by making inquiries even before the convention started,” Organizing Committee Chairman Noh Sang-il said. “Furthermore, with the Korean Wave, the interest of mainstream consumers is higher than ever, so export contracts worth \$1 billion will be signed at the convention.” 장

24th World Korean Business Convention in 2026 will be held in Incheon

Incheon has been selected as the host city for the 24th World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) in 2026.

This was confirmed at the 23rd WKBC Steering Committee meeting held in Atlanta, U.S., on April 17.

The WKBC is the largest economic networking event for Koreans, with approximately 3,000 participants, including overseas Korean businesspeople and domestic businesspeople from 64 countries around the world. The purpose of the convention is to support the overseas expansion of domestic small and medium-sized enterprises and promote global business cooperation.

Incheon will host the WKBC for the third time, following 2009 and 2018. The convention will be held at the Songdo Convensia for three days in April or October next year. The detailed schedule will be finalized in consultation with the Overseas Koreans Agency.

As the host city, Incheon will perform roles, such as hosting a welcome dinner and banquet, supporting participant transportation and logistics, organizing volunteers and promoting the event. It plans to establish a regional operation



A poster for the 24th World Korean Business Convention in 2026

strategy and explore large-scale events and follow-up projects.

“We hope that this year of overseas Koreans visiting Incheon will be a turning point for not only revitalizing the local economy but also expanding overseas expansion and global cooperation for domestic companies,” said Kim Young-shin, Incheon’s director of international cooperation. “We will work closely with the OKA to thoroughly prepare for holding the event and managing the post-event performance.”

‘Volunteers are main characters who led successful hosting of convention’

Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk attended the 23rd World Korean Business Convention Volunteers inauguration ceremony hosted by the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 15 and encouraged the volunteers.

The 23rd World Korean Business Convention, where Korean businesspeople from around the world gathered in one place, was held from April 17-20 at the Atlanta Gas South Convention Center.


This year’s event volunteers totaled about 200 people, providing guidance and interpretation throughout the event, including corporate exhibitions and one-to-one business meetings, to enhance the convenience of participants and help the event run smoothly.

“People in Korea are also cheering on the World Korean Business Convention held in Atlanta,” Lee said at the inauguration ceremony. “Each and every volunteer is a bridge connecting domestic small and medium-sized enterprises and overseas Korean businesspeople, and the success of the event rests on the shoulders of the volunteers.”



Volunteers participating in the 23rd World Korean Business Convention attend the inauguration ceremony in front of the Gas South Convention Center in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., on April 15.

Lee Kyung-chul, president of the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA, said, “We will do our best to make the event a success, as all members of the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA across the U.S. have prepared for it with one mind and one heart.”

Noh Sang-il, chair of the organizing committee, and Kang Shin-beom, head of operations, also attended the inauguration ceremony. 

OKA awarded grand prize in Policy Empathy by Korean Association for Policy Studies

Recognized for introducing and effectively implementing policy to improve public's experience of civil services.

The Overseas Koreans Agency has been honored with a top policy award from Korea's most prestigious academic organization ahead of its second anniversary.

The agency was honored with the top prize in the Policy Empathy category at the 14th Korean Association for Policy Studies (KAPS) Grand Prize Awards Ceremony held at the Seoul LW Convention Center in Jungnim-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul on Friday.

KAPS said it selected the OKA for the award because of its "high level of specificity and effectiveness," recognizing it has introduced and effectively implemented policies to improve the public's experience of civil service requests, such as ▲ Improving overseas Koreans' access to civil service systems, ▲ Expanding the online-based counseling system and ▲ Introducing a customized response system.

A representative policy that the OKA has been promoting is the Overseas Korean Authentication Center service, which was launched Nov. 28 last year. Overseas Koreans can now use various online services, including e-financial services, without having to visit an overseas diplomatic mission, as they can verify their identity non-face-to-face, even if they do not have a mobile phone in Korea.

Until now, citizens living abroad had to travel long distances to overseas embassies to obtain a financial certificate to use domestic online services, and even after obtaining the certificate, they were required to verify their identity with a domestic mobile phone to actually use the service, which was cumbersome.

The Overseas Korean Authentication Center service is the first project in the world to establish and operate a non-face-to-face identity verification system for overseas citizens based on e-passports and overseas residence information, and can be seen as one of the best and most innovative projects for digital platform governments.

Additionally, in December last year, a branch of the OKA Unified Civil Service Support Center was established at Incheon International Airport to help overseas Koreans arriving and departing from overseas to easily obtain various certificates. In March, a dedicated window was opened at the Gwanghwamun Service Support Center to help Korean adoptees find their family



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (R) receives an award from President Park Hyung-jun of the Korean Association for Policy Studies and takes a commemorative photo at the 14th KAPS Policy Awards Ceremony at the Seoul LW Convention Center in Jungnim-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, on April 25.

members, including birth parents, and consult on their grievances and difficulties.

The agency plans to continue to expand a variety of one-stop digital civil affairs services for overseas Koreans to experience practical convenience.

OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said in his acceptance speech, "As seen in the achievements of the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in 2025, where we declared this year as the first year of establishing the global Hansang Economic Zone and achieved export contracts worth \$50 million, the OKA will continue to expand civil services so that our compatriots can experience them even more and also will continue to actively implement realistic policies for our compatriots." 

‘Compatriots are assets of Republic of Korea and countermeasures against population reduction and rural depopulation’

OKA Commissioner Lee emphasizes ‘support for domestic compatriots’ as new agenda

Summary of OKA commissioner’s opening speech at academic conference

The Overseas Koreans Agency has been supporting overseas Korean organizations and providing overseas Korean language teachers with training programs for visiting their home countries and inviting the next generation of compatriots to visit their home countries for training in order to foster the identity of the Korean people. The new agenda of the OKA will regard the issue of supporting domestic compatriots. It is currently estimated that there are about 1 million of them. Of these, there are about 870,000 Joseonjok (Korean Chinese). However, recently, many Koryo people, especially Koryo people from the CIS region, have been coming to Korea. Currently, over 100,000 Koryo people have settled in Korea, and it is expected that about 100,000 more will come to Korea in the future.

Supporting the stable settlement of domestic compatriots is also becoming a new task for the agency. Another is that the overseas Korean community is growing significantly, and in particular, many businessmen and merchants are emerging. The so-called Hansang is estimated to number over 400,000, including small business owners. The annual sales of overseas Koreans in business alone are estimated to exceed \$100 billion. Establishing a cooperative network that can coexist with these overseas Korean merchants that have grown in size and struggling domestic small and medium-sized enterprises and large corporations is also a major task of the Overseas Koreans Agency. That is why the OKA hosted the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta in the U.S. from April 17-20, and achieved great results with contracts worth over \$50 million and local consultations worth nearly \$700 million.

We are currently facing serious issues of the population falling off a cliff and local depopulation. As one of the measures to resolve this issue, we are putting a lot of thought into ensuring that our compatriots who have settled in Korea, especially the Koryo-saram who have been increasing recently, can settle down stably and establish themselves as assets of Korea, as well as contribute to the development of our domestic industries.

In addition, Koryo-saram villages have been formed all over the



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers a speech at the opening ceremony of the 14th KAPS Policy Awards Ceremony and academic conference held at the Seoul LW Convention Center in Jungnim-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, on April 25.

country, including Incheon, Ansan in Gyeonggi Province, Pohang in Gyeongbuk Province, Gwangju metropolitan city and Jecheon in Chungbuk Province. In particular, in some regions, 90 percent of elementary school students are Koryo-saram, and in some cases, Korean students are a minority. Therefore, the long-term policy goal of the OKA is to foster second- and third-generation Koryo descendants and grant permanent residency and citizenship to excellent members of the community so that they can be fostered as assets of the Republic of Korea.

Therefore, I recently visited the Korea Scholarship Foundation and representatives of separate companies, and both emphasized and requested cooperation around fostering excellent students among our second- and third-generation Koreans in CIS regions; overseas adoptees; and those in Southeast Asian regions, such as Lai Dai Han (children born to South Korean fathers and Vietnamese mothers during the Vietnam War) and Kopino (people of mixed Korean and Filipino descent), and ultimately nurturing them as assets for our Republic of Korea, as a countermeasure to the population decline and the extinction of local regions through depopulation. 

Success of Overseas Korean Policy Academic Conference themed around Global Hansang Economic Zone

Compatriots residing in Korea need to change perception about important role in establishing K-community



Professor Choi Yeon-gu of Konkuk University gives a presentation on the topic of “Establishing K-community and support policies.”

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) and the Korean Association for Policy Studies (Chairman Park Hyung-joon, professor at Sungkyunkwan University) jointly held the 2025 Spring Academic Conference on April 25.

Approximately 300 domestic policy experts and practitioners attended the academic conference, which aims to strengthen the academic foundation of overseas Korean policies and improve policy effectiveness.

The academic conference was held over two sessions under the themes of “Establishment and policy support for K-community” and “Establishment of global Hansang economic zone and pathways for utilizing overseas Korean talent.”

In the first session, professor Choi Yeon-gu of Konkuk University gave a presentation on the theme of “Establishment and Support Policy of K-community,” suggesting a policy direction for forming a community centered on “Koreanity,” diversity-based identity and open networks. Dr. Yoo Minee of the Migration Research & Training Centre pointed out policy blind spots in employment, residence and education, based on the “Results of the survey of overseas Koreans residing in Korea,” and suggested directions for policy improvement.

The OKA’s Policy Director Lee Ki-seong, Dr. Jeong So-yoon of

the Korea Institute of Public Administration and Dr. Lee Chang-won of the Migration Research & Training Centre had a lively debate on the policy feasibility of establishing a K-community. In particular, the discussants emphasized the need for a change in perception to realize that overseas Koreans residing in Korea can play a very important role in establishing a K-community. The debate discussed the acceptance of overseas Koreans by domestic Koreans and the problems of the government’s policies on overseas compatriots residing in Korea.

“There is still a discriminatory mindset among Koreans that views our compatriots as ‘black-haired foreigners,’” Director Lee Ki-seong said, expressing his opinion that overseas Koreans feel discrimination more seriously than ordinary Koreans and that this should be addressed comprehensively.

It was also pointed out that the government’s domestic compatriot policy is limited to the simple management of residency. Accordingly, the need for specialized support policies by the OKA for compatriots was also discussed.

The discussants said that compatriots are being discouraged through competition with foreigners and that the OKA should develop specialized support policies for compatriots that are differentiated from policies for foreigners.

There was also a discussion on the need for a paradigm shift in the OKA's domestic compatriot support policy. It was suggested that the policy paradigm should be shifted from management-centered to support-centered for overseas compatriots residing in Korea.

"The OKA is making various efforts to strengthen support for the stable settlement of overseas compatriots in Korea and to improve the acceptance of overseas compatriots by domestic Koreans," Lee said.

The director then introduced examples of overseas Korean organizations' community contribution activities and the improvement in their acceptance by domestic Koreans.

In January, the office held a blood donation event with the National Federation of Korean Chinese Compatriots to share life with the meaning of "brothers who have shared blood."

In February, the agency held a food sharing event with Koryo compatriots living in Korea at the Yeonsu-gu Senior Welfare Center. A food sharing event with Chinese compatriots also took place the following week. In addition, a survey on the status of overseas Koreans residing in Korea and measures to improve policies were discussed. It was also suggested that investments should be made in policy capacity to improve the domestic public's perception of overseas Koreans. The need for a more systematic survey by age and purpose was emphasized.

"We are planning to conduct a comprehensive information and statistics survey of compatriots residing in Korea next year," Lee said, adding that the number of multicultural families in Korea and overseas compatriots residing in Korea is similar at 1 million each, and that budget consultations are under way with the Ministry of Strategy and Finance for a survey on compatriots, much like the survey on information and statistics on multicultural families. He emphasized the need for an accurate survey.

The discussants pointed out that the budget of the OKA is 100 billion won, while the budget of the Science and Creativity Foundation, which is smaller in scale than the OKA, is 200 billion won. The argument that dividing the 100 billion-won budget of the OKA among the 7 million overseas compatriots would result in only 14,000 won per person, which would limit actual policy implementation, was also persuasive.

There was also an opinion that the OKA should focus on the role of coordinator of existing policies rather than an independent policy agent in the initial stage.

Professor Choi Yeon-gu drew attention by suggesting that the main role of the OKA should be to establish the concept of



Panelists engage in a lively debate over the policy feasibility of establishing a K-community.

Koreanity. Choi said that the concept of Koreanity has not yet been clearly defined, but it is in the process of being established less than two years after the establishment of the OKA, and that Koreanity should be approached as an open concept rather than a fixed one, with the OKA playing a major role in developing this idea.

There was also lively discussion on the future prospects of the K-community through solving the population problem and establishing a new identity for overseas Koreans. It was argued that solving the population problem would be made possible by establishing a new identity beyond the focus on territory and blood relations. Professor Myung Seung-hwan of Inha University's Department of Public Administration emphasized that securing a larger budget will occur naturally once the new identity direction is established.

In the second session, professor Lee Cheol-seung of Chosun University gave a presentation on the topic of "Policy approaches for building a Hansang economic zone," emphasizing, "In order to strengthen the global network of Korean businesses with community theories centered around the philosophy of harmony, the creation of a mutually beneficial ecosystem between overseas businesspeople and their home countries should be prioritized."

Professor Woo Kyung-seop of Inha University presented "Policy plans for utilizing overseas Korean talent," focusing on Joseon Korean Chinese who were naturalized in Manchuria, and emphasized the importance of crafting a policy for the inflow of talent tailored to each generation, occupation and type.

The panelists, including professor Lee Dan-bi of Seoul National University of Science and Technology, Dr. Kim Hwa-yeon of the Migration Research & Training Centre and professor Lee Jang-seop of Chonnam National University, unanimously agreed that "establishing a Hansang economic zone is an important policy to expand Korea's economic territory and build global competitiveness," and emphasized the need to expand the talent pool and build a linkage platform. 장

Goryeoin Independence Movement Monument built in Ansan OKA says, 'We will embrace Koryo people more warmly'

A monument to honor the independence movement of Koreans who led the anti-Japanese struggle in Russia's Primorsky Krai has been built for the first time in Korea.

The monument, which opened at Hwarang Amusement Park in Ansan, Gyeonggi Province, on April 4, was promoted by the Numu Corp. on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the March 1 Movement in 1919, when it proposed that the sublime spirit and history of the Korean people who devoted themselves to the independence movement should be known to future generations.

The National Promotion Committee for Korean Independence Movement Monuments was formed as an opportunity to revisit the historical contributions of the independence activists, and the monument was built with the support of 253 donors, the Ansan



The unveiling ceremony of the Goryeoin Independence Movement Monument at Hwarang Amusement Park in Ansan, Gyeonggi Province, on April 4.

Hope Foundation and Numu. The unveiling ceremony was hosted by Ansan, Numu and the Association of Koryo-saram, and organized by the Promotion Committee and the Committee for Commemorating the 160th Anniversary of Korean Migration.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) vowed to "provide a warmer embrace for Koryo people living in Korea" with the unveiling of the monument.

"The monument not only recognizes prominent independence fighters, such as Gen. Hong Bum-do and Choi Jae-hyung, but also the noble will of countless Koryo people," OKA Deputy Commissioner Byun Cheol-hwan said in his remarks at the unveiling ceremony. "It will serve as a reminder to our children of the history of the proud spirit of independence and national solidarity of the Korean diaspora."

First Hallyu Culture Festival in Cuba to commemorate first anniversary of diplomatic relations

The Havana Hallyu Culture Festival 2025, organized by the Baekbong Institute for Political Culture and Education, was held in the Cuban capital to commemorate the first anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Cuba from April 9-12.

"The festival was significant in that it was the first purely cultural festival organized by Koreans in Cuba after the establishment of diplomatic relations," said Ra Jong-il, former South Korean ambassador to Japan and the United Kingdom, who heads the institute. "There was a lot of local interest."

The event was organized through the cooperation of various government and private organizations. The South Korean Embassy in Cuba and the Cuban Embassy in South Korea also served as



The Hallyu Culture Festival is held in Havana, Cuba, on April 12.

sponsors. In the cultural arena, filmmaker Kang Jae-kyu, who led the renaissance of Korean cinema with "Shiri" and "Taegukgi," personally participated in the event and discussed the future of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Academic exchanges also took place. For example, scholars from both countries discussed the works of Nobel Prize-winning author Han Kang and Virgilio Pinera, who are often compared in the literary world.

Marta Lim Kim, the daughter of independence activist Lim Cheon-taek (1903-1985) and younger sister of Cuban politician Jeronimo Lim, also gave a lecture on her book "Koreans in Cuba." Each discussion and lecture was followed by a flurry of questions from the local audience.

Former U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commissioner Wendy Lee Gramm honored as Immigrant Hero of Year

Former U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commissioner Wendy Lee Gramm was recently honored with the Immigrant Hero of the Year Award, which recognizes Korean Americans who have contributed to the development of the United States as immigrants and enhanced the quality of the Korean American community.

The nonprofit organization Korea-America Friendship Association (President Park Sun-geun) announced the recipient of its 2025 Immigrant Hero Award. A third-generation Korean American immigrant from Hawaii, Dr. Lee Gramm earned a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College and a Ph.D. in economics from Northwestern University, and taught economics at Texas A&M University for more than eight years.

From 1985-1988, Lee Gramm served as an assistant secretary in the Presidential Office of Management and Budget and then the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). At the time, she was the highest-



Wendy Lee Gramm (L), former chair of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), and Gen. Michael Siegl

ranking Korean American in the federal executive branch. She later served as chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) from 1988-1993 and as director of the Regulatory Policy Institute at George Mason University.

She is married to former Sen. Phil Gramm, and they have two sons and five grandchildren. Former Sen. Gramm served as chair of the

Senate Banking Committee and was also a presidential candidate.

The organization also announced that Gen. Michael Siegl, the only active-duty Korean American general in the U.S. Army and currently serving as the 57th chief of staff and quartermaster general, will receive the 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Immigrant Hero Award winner will receive \$25,000, while the Lifetime Achievement Award winner will receive \$5,000. The recipients plan to donate the prize money to a U.S. nonprofit organization of their choice.

'Pride of Korean Mexicans' Hangeul school raises money to repair aging building

A 36-year-old Hangeul school in Mexico, which is considered the pride of the Korean community in Mexico, is facing difficulties in educating students due to the aging building and has recently started fundraising activities to improve the educational space and expand facilities.

The Korean School in Mexico building in the center of Mexico City was recently assessed to be in need of repairs due to structural deformation and damage.

The Korean School in Mexico was established in response to the wishes of compatriots in Mexico, which was once a barren country for Hangeul education. Led by Korean business, the school purchased the current building in May 2010 with donations from various community members and Korean companies and support from the Overseas Koreans Foundation (now the Overseas Koreans Agency).

In 2012, a second round of fundraising was conducted to build an

annex, including an auditorium, and with the support of Korean business, the school was able to function as a stable school.

However, the building itself

is old and in increasing need of maintenance.

"The building is more than 100 years old and is designated as a historical building in Mexico, so we can only do so much," said Oh Young-ran, principal of the Korean School in Mexico.

Currently, the school has 220 students and 20 teachers in 17 classes, including kindergarten (three classes), Native Korean (nine classes) and Korean language (five classes), who stay for more than four to five hours every Saturday for various activities. This year marks the 120th anniversary of Korean immigration to Mexico, where about 15,000 Koreans live.



The Korean School in Mexico, located in the heart of Mexico City

OKA and Chungbuk Province sign agreement to help local businesses and youth enter overseas markets

OKA Commissioner Lee to utilize overseas Korean business network to help Chungbuk companies expand overseas opportunities

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) and North Chungcheong Province (Gov. Kim Young-hwan) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on April 17 during the 23rd World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, to cooperate to help local businesses and youth in Chungbuk successfully expand overseas.

Through this agreement, the two organizations will work together to strengthen the global capabilities of youth in the province by actively exploring overseas expansion opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in the Chungbuk region through the use of overseas Korean networks around the world and providing internship opportunities at overseas Korean companies to outstanding talents in the region.

Every year, the OKA sends about 30 young Koreans to intern at overseas Korean companies around the world, and this year, as part of the follow-up to the 22nd WKBC, the organization plans to send 10 more students from North Jeolla Province through a pilot project with the region.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L) poses for a photo with North Chungcheong Province Gov. Kim Young-hwan after signing an MOU together on April 17.

OKA discusses cooperation with Kazakhstan's Koryo community

Policy Director Lee Ki-sung meets with Shin Andrei, chairman of Almaty Koryo National Association

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) has begun gathering the opinions of the Koryo community to seek pathways for development and cooperation.

Lee Ki-sung, director of overseas Korean policy at the OKA, met with Shin Andrei, a member of the Almaty City Council and chairman of the Almaty Koryo National Association, at the OKA headquarters in Songdo, Incheon, on April 7 to learn about the current status of the Kazakh Koryo community and discuss future cooperation.

During the meeting, Shin said the Koryo community in Kazakhstan is active and explained the K-PARK project in Almaty, which is being promoted by the community, as well as the Koryo compatriots' homeland visit project.

Lee explained the projects that the OKA is implementing to support the Koryo diaspora and suggested that the OKA and the Almaty Koryo Central Committee continue to communicate and work together to ensure the stable resettlement of the Koryo diaspora.

Shin is the CEO of Shin Line Group and a member of the Almaty



Lee Ki-sung (R), director of policy at the OKA, met with Shin Andrei, a member of the Almaty City Council and chairman of the Almaty Koryo National Association, at the OKA headquarters in Songdo, Incheon, on April 7 to discuss cooperation.

City Council, and in September 2022, he became the chairman of the Almaty Koryo National Committee. Founded in 1989, the organization is actively engaged in preserving and inheriting Korean culture, promoting Korean language education, expanding exchanges and cooperation with South Korea, and promoting harmony among ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan.

OKA signs MOU with aT: 'Expanding K-food exports at WKBC'

OKA Commissioner Lee: 'Actively supporting agri-food companies' efforts to enter North American market'

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation (aT) on April 8 to make the 23rd World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., a platform for K-food to expand its presence in the North American market.

The WKBC was held at the Atlanta Gas South Convention Center from April 7-20 under the slogan "Leaping into the Korean Business Zone - Korean Merchants Together Towards the Future of the World of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses."

On Feb. 13, the two organizations signed an MOU at the aT Center in Yangjae-dong, Seoul, to cooperate on the overseas expansion of Korean agri-food companies. Under the agreement,



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L) signs a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation (aT) CEO Hong Moon-pyo at the OKA headquarters in Songdo, Incheon, on April 8 to support Korean food companies' entry into the North American market.

the two organizations will support the expansion of K-food sales by utilizing overseas Korean networks to expand Korea's food territory and provide overseas Korean business consulting (OK Biz) to Korean food companies that want to expand overseas.

"We will actively help 115 Korean agri-food companies participating in the 23rd WKBC meet with North American buyers and create tangible business results," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said during the signing ceremony in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon.

In response, aT CEO Hong Moon-pyo said, "We will collaborate with the OKA to strengthen the competitiveness of Korean agricultural and food companies so that they can increase their exports and overseas expansions."

OKA-Siheung to expand cooperation to support compatriots in Korea

OKA Deputy Commissioner Byun discusses policies with Mayor Lim

The Overseas Koreans Agency has decided to expand cooperation with Siheung, Gyeonggi Province, to stabilize the settlement of overseas compatriots living in Korea.

According to the OKA, Deputy Commissioner Byun Chul-hwan met with Mayor Lim Byung-taek at Siheung City Hall on April 2 and agreed that the growing number of overseas compatriots living in Korea are valuable members of Korean society who can contribute to overcoming national challenges, such as the declining birthrate, aging population and rural depopulation.

Siheung has been highlighted as an example of laying the foundation for mutual cultural solidarity in the region by ▲ Establishing a school platform for foreign children, ▲ Operating a global division within the Jeongwangbon-dong Residents



OKA Deputy Commissioner Byun Chul-hwan (R) meets with Siheung Mayor Lim Byung-taek at Siheung City Hall on April 2 to discuss policies to support overseas compatriots living in Korea.

Association and ▲ Providing Korean language education programs centered on Chinese compatriots.

"Until now, local governments have individually been carrying out the tasks related to compatriots living in Korea, but now that the OKA has been established, we hope to create synergistic effects in supporting compatriots' resettlement by combining the agency's expertise and local

governments' field experience," Byun said.

"Siheung is a city with a rapidly growing influx of foreigners and Chinese compatriots, with 70,000 registered foreigners and foreign nationals accounting for 12 percent of the city's 600,000 population," Lim said. "I am grateful and encouraged that the OKA is actively promoting support for compatriots living in the city, which has not received much attention from government policy so far."



OKA provides necessities and relief supplies to Myanmar's Korean community affected by strong earthquake

The Overseas Koreans Agency has donated US\$30,000 worth of supplies and relief goods to affected Koreans following the recent earthquake in Myanmar. The OKA enacted the "Guidelines for Supporting Overseas Koreans in Crisis" early last year.

Accordingly, the agency has been actively helping compatriots overcome their crises, such as providing generators to the Cuban community in November last year after a typhoon caused a massive power outage.

After the strong earthquake in Myanmar, the OKA, in cooperation with the Myanmar Korean Association and local diplomatic missions, assessed the damage and relief needs of overseas Koreans and sent supplies. It will continue to actively consider additional support in light of local conditions.

"We were able to provide effective support thanks to the cooperation of the Korean Association and our diplomatic missions in the region," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. "We hope



Cho Sung-hyun, chair of the Myanmar Korean Association, and his staff at the center of the earthquake recovery efforts

that this support will bring some comfort and help to our compatriots affected by the earthquake in Mandalay and Naypyidaw, Myanmar."

OKA encourages Koryo students living in Korea who received Choi Jae-hyung Scholarships

Asian Development Foundation (ADF) to provide one-year scholarships to 20 high school and college students

The Overseas Koreans Agency gave words of encouragement to Koryo students in Korea who have received scholarships honoring Choi Jae-hyung (1860-1920), an independence fighter who was active in Russia.

Lee Ki-sung, director of policy at the OKA, delivered congratulatory remarks and cheered on the recipients of the scholarships at the 2025 ADF-Choi Jae-hyung Scholarship awards ceremony, hosted by the Asia Development Foundation (ADF) on April 12 at the Seoul Public Service Support Center in Yongsan-gu, Seoul.

In honor of Choi Jae-hyung's "pechka" spirit, ADF provides annual scholarships of 2 million won and a living stipend of 1 million won to Koryo college and high school students living in Korea in order to foster future generations with the potential to contribute to the Korean diaspora. This year, 12 university students and eight high school students received scholarships.

"The scholarship recipients are the future of the Koryo people and Korean society, and we hope that this scholarship will provide an



The 2025 ADF-Choi Jae-hyung Scholarship awards ceremony is held at the Public Service Support Center in Yongsan-gu, Seoul, on April 12.

opportunity for them to grow into global talents," ADF Executive Director Cho Nam-cheol said at the ceremony.

Congratulating the Koryo students on being selected as scholarship recipients, Director Lee Ki-Sung said, "As the Koryo diaspora overcomes the difficulties they face in settling in Korea and builds success stories, the OKA and the Asian Development Foundation will encourage them in their endeavors to contribute to Korean society more quickly and become dependable support."

Celebrating opening of Overseas Adoptee Service Center

As an overseas adoptee, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the opening of the Overseas Adoptee Service Center.

I was adopted by a family in Sweden at a young age and had to grow up in a country with a new language, culture and environment. The experience of adoption is a life-changing event that brings with it a lot of excitement and confusion. Throughout the process, I have always had a love for my home country and have tried to build a good relationship with it.

Many overseas adoptees, like me, want to reestablish ties with their home countries, but administrative procedures, language barriers and cultural differences in their home countries make it difficult.

On March 25, the Overseas Koreans Agency opened a dedicated service center for overseas adoptees at the OKA Service Support Center on the second floor of Twin Tree Tower A, 6 Yulgok-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul. By staffing the center with professional English-speaking counselors, it is expected to help resolve the concerns of adopted Koreans who have experienced difficulties in filing service requests due to their inability to speak Korean. We believe that the opening of the dedicated service center is not just an extension of administrative services but a meaningful starting point to respect the existence of overseas adoptees and listen to their voices.

The center is expected to provide practical assistance to Korean adoptees in Korea and abroad, such as finding their birth parents and other family members, restoring their nationality, applying for overseas compatriot visas, visiting the homeland and supporting resettlement. In addition, the center will provide a warm bridge that connects people with their home country by providing counsel on various problems and difficulties.

There are about 200,000 Korean adoptees around the world, living in various countries while maintaining their Korean roots. They want to understand and connect with their home country, but the reality is that there are many barriers, including language, administrative and institutional.



Louise Lindberg,
secretary general of Global
Overseas Adoptees' Link

We hope this will help break down the barrier a little bit and that adoptees will recognize their home country as a country that is always with them, rather than just a country that they visit. Adopted Koreans are not mere recipients of support but rather civilian diplomats who connect their adopted countries with Korea. With their multicultural sensitivity and complex identities, adopted Koreans are important assets for Korea as it strives to become a global backbone nation.

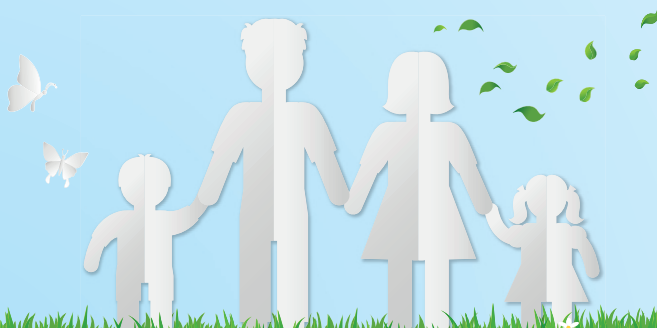
From this perspective, the OKA is not just an administrative agency but a partner and a pillar of strength in shaping the future with the Korean diaspora around the world.

I hope that the policy meeting on April 29 for the resettlement of adopted compatriots in Korea will provide good policy options for the resettlement of adoptees in the homeland and that the agency will be able to play a stable role in promoting relations between the adoptive and home countries.

Finally, we need to continue to communicate and cooperate in order to further strengthen the institutional framework for overseas adoptees. The role of the OKA will be enhanced if a structure is put in place to reflect the experiences and voices of overseas Korean adoptees in policymaking.

Overseas Korean adoptees are valuable members of Korea. We hope that more warm hands will join us in our journey to find our roots and take a step toward our homeland. 🇰🇷

* The contributor's claims or opinions may differ from the position of the Overseas Koreans Agency.



OKA's Upcoming Events

April 17-20: 23rd World Korean Business Convention (Atlanta)
25: 14th Korea Policy Institute Policy Awards Ceremony and 2025 Spring Conference

OKA Commissioner's Activities in April

April 3: Inauguration ceremony of the president of the World Federation of Korean Association of Commerce (Lee Jung-geun, president of Booyoung Group)
Interview with Kim Seok-ki, chair of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee
7: 69th Newspaper Day commemoration ceremony
8: MOU signing ceremony between OKA and Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation
9: 1st Sangji Korea Forum
10: Ministerial meeting on national issues
Meeting with Bae Byeong-il, chair of Korea Scholarship Foundation
17~20: 23rd World Korean Business Convention (Atlanta)
23rd World Korean Business Convention Steering Committee, opening ceremony of business expo, welcome dinner hosted by OKA commissioner, opening and closing ceremonies of 23rd WKBC, etc.
18~20: Capacity building training for Hangeul schools
19: 2025 committee meeting of World Korean Association Conference
23~24: Plenary session of National Assembly Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Committee
25: 14th Korea Policy Institute Policy Award Ceremony and 2025 Spring Conference
29: Policy meeting on supporting the settlement of adopted Koreans in Korea

OKA Announcements

Call for nominations for 19th World Korean Day achievement awards

Nominations open until May 6; types of awards include National Medal of Honor, National Decoration and Commendation

To commemorate the 19th World Korean Day in 2025, which will be celebrated Oct. 5, the Overseas Koreans Agency is inviting nominations for the following awards to recognize overseas Koreans who have contributed to the advancement of the rights and interests of overseas Koreans and the development of Korea and the Korean community. The agency is inviting people to nominate suitable candidates by May 6.

The types of awards are the National Medal of Honor, the National Decoration and the Commendation. The eligibility requirements for nominations are as follows.

Those eligible for nomination include individuals and organizations who have contributed to the advancement of the rights and interests of overseas Koreans and the development of Korea and the Korean community under the following categories:

▲ Contributed to the settlement and improvement of the status of overseas Koreans as exemplary members of the Korean community in their country of residence, ▲ Contributed to the fostering of the Korean identity of overseas Koreans and the strengthening of their bonds with the homeland, ▲ Contributed to building a global Korean network and promoting exchanges between the Korean community and their home countries,

▲ Contributed to advancing the rights and interests of overseas Koreans in Korea, and ▲ Contributed to the mutual development of Korea and the overseas Korean community by supporting the development of human resources of overseas Koreans.

The minimum period of meritorious service for each award is 15 years or more for medals, 10 years or more for decorations and five years or more for commendations.

Those who are excluded from nomination include the following.

▲ A person who has already received a government award may not receive a government award again within seven years for a medal, five years for a decoration and three years for a commendation, regardless of the discipline or field of the award. ▲ An organization that has received an organizational prize cannot receive the award again for the same field within two years. ▲ A recipient of a medal cannot be recommended for an award of the same class or lower class or the same type of decoration and a recipient of a decoration cannot be recommended for the same type of decoration. ▲ Recipients of medals and decorations cannot be cited for the same meritorious service.

For more information, please contact the Overseas Korean Policy Division at okapolicy@korea.kr.

먼저 만나면 더 좋을거야

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