



Special Article - President Lee Jae Myung inaugurated

Special Feature - 2,600 next-generation Koreans from 70 countries come home to find their roots

Overseas Korean of the Month - Park Byung-heon, former student soldier who led development of his homeland

Current Issues & Topics - OK-BIZ helps Korean SMEs expand overseas

Compatriot network (OK-BIZ) helps SMEs expand abroad

Policy in Focus - 'There should be systemic efforts to include marginalized Sakhalin compatriots'



2025 Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training





## Overseas compatriots at forefront of unleashing Korean Wave

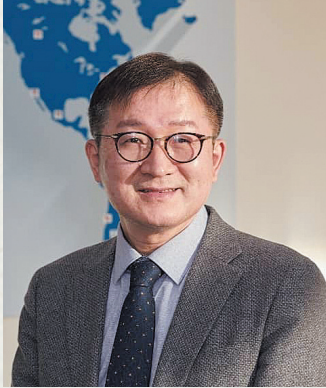
Is the Korean Wave an industry, a culture or an emotion? Today's Hallyu, which has expanded beyond K-pop and drama, K-food and K-beauty to include K-culture and K-lifestyle, is not just driven by national brand strategies or technology. First and foremost, there is K-content based on the creativity and diversity of its creators and producers, and behind it is the global Korean community, who are the voluntary evangelists of the Korean Wave.

Just look at Sao Paulo, Brazil, where I was a correspondent for three years. The Korean community of Bom Retiro was declared a Koreatown by the city in 2010. Since then, it has expanded into a space that reinforces the Korean identity, from sculptures like "Uri" to the naming of a street as Prates-Corea in Bom Retiro. Behind the spread of the Korean Wave are the collaborative efforts and power of organizations like the Korean Town Development Committee.

Korean restaurants are thriving in Bom Retiro. Once a place where Korean emigrants and dispatched workers were the main customers, the number of Brazilian locals has increased. According to a KOTRA survey, 87.9 percent of locals who visited Korean restaurants said they were influenced by K-pop and K-dramas. The Korean Wave has expanded to include K-food and Korean language learning. In 2013, a Korean language department was opened at Sao Paulo State University. The subsequent establishment of the Korean Cultural Center and the Sejong Institute are the result of the efforts of the Korean Embassy and the Korean community.

The "Dream Concert," which was held for compatriot youth, was opened to all nationalities as a "K-pop cover dance contest" at the strong request of Brazilian youth. Events, such as the "Gangnam Style" flash mob and the "K-pop Invasion" organized by local cultural organizations, demonstrated the growing popularity of the Korean Wave in Brazil. K-pop has become an attractive "peer culture" among Brazilian youth, and our compatriots have become "K-culture evangelists." In this atmosphere, BTS held four concerts in Brazil.

Indeed, the role of overseas Koreans is important. According to the Overseas Koreans Agency, overseas Koreans contribute to building friendship and cooperation between their home and



Jung Gil-hwa,  
director of the Hallyu Convergence  
Research Institute at Dongguk University  
(former head of the Korean Foundation for  
International Cultural Exchange)

resident countries in the political and diplomatic fields. Their increase in political power also expands the influence of Koreans and represents Korea's national interests. In the economic field, the economic activities of overseas Koreans ("hansang") have the effect of expanding the economic territory of the country. They contribute to domestic investment, remittances and job creation, and they also play a leading role in exporting Korean products.

In particular, in the field of culture, overseas Koreans contribute to building friendship and cooperation between their own countries and homeland, and serve as a medium for spreading the Korean Wave. Cultural events organized by Korean communities around the world are effective in promoting Korea and are a public

diplomacy asset for enhancing the country's image. The Korean Culture Day organized by the Brazilian Association of Koreans is a typical example. In addition, for our children's generation, the Korean Wave will allow them to discover the "Korea in ourselves." The Korean diaspora is driving the expansion and localization of the Korean Wave.

In fact, in Sao Paulo, some Koreans have started K-content businesses, while others have been promoting K-food and even opened Korean restaurants. There are also many volunteers who teach Korean to locals. In this way, the Korean Wave lives and breathes with overseas Koreans. It is not something that exists outside of borders, but rather it is a cultural companion beyond borders. The sustainability of the Korean Wave comes from the empathy and solidarity of people who love and practice Korea around the world. These currents continue to flow today.

There are tasks that need to be accomplished to further revitalize the Korean Wave. In addition to overseas missions, KOTRA, the Korean Cultural Center, the Sejong Institute, the Korea Tourism Organization, the Korea Creative Content Agency, etc., should establish a close cooperation system with each other. A control tower is needed. The Korean Wave is no longer a one-way street but a "culture of co-creation" with the local community, which requires systematic content exchanges, programs for youth and the fostering of the next generation of leaders. 🇰🇷





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**Address:** 34~36th Floor, Booyoung Songdo Tower, 241, Incheon Tower-daero, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, Korea (22009)

**Tel:** +82-2-6747-0404, [www.oka.go.kr](http://www.oka.go.kr)

**Instagram:** @overseas\_koreans\_agency

**Facebook:** facebook.com/oka202365

**YouTube:** @OKAKOREA

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

# 'I will be president for everyone, encompassing and serving all people'

'We will be a just and unifying gov't, a flexible and pragmatic gov't'



President Lee Jae Myung takes the oath of office during the inauguration ceremony of the 14th president at the National Assembly in Yeouido, Seoul, on June 4.

President Lee Jae Myung on June 4 said he will be “a president for everyone, to include and serve all people, no matter who you supported in the presidential election, in line with bringing meaning to a call for greater unity.”

“The Lee Jae Myung government will be a pragmatic, market-oriented government,” he said. “Not a government that controls and manages but a government that supports and encourages.”

“The new Democratic Party government of Lee Jae Myung will be a just, unifying and flexible pragmatic government,” he said, defining the identity of the new government.

President Lee introduced this blueprint for governance in his “Message to the People” after taking the oath of office at the National Assembly.

## 'Restoring people's livelihoods and reviving economy'

“It is time to rebuild genuine security and peace, which have been reduced to a tool of political strife; people’s livelihoods and economy, which have been destroyed by indifference, incompetence and irresponsibility; and democracy, which has been destroyed by armored vehicles and automatic rifles,” Lee said.

“The insurgency, which usurped national sovereignty at the point of a gun entrusted to the people, must never happen again. We will thoroughly investigate the truth, hold those responsible accountable and firmly prepare measures to prevent a recurrence,” he said, emphasizing his determination to overcome the insurgency.

However, the president emphasized the need to move past the martial law incident, saying, “An enlightened revolution commands us to go beyond ending the insurgency and build a shining new country.

“We are now at a crossroads of great transformation,” Lee said. “We are facing a complex crisis that is layered like tangled threads in all areas of civil life, economy, foreign affairs, security and democracy.”

In particular, Lee made it clear he would focus on the economy, saying he would “start by restoring people’s livelihoods and revitalizing the economy.” In fact, the word ‘citizens’ appears 42 times in the draft of the speech distributed by the presidential office, followed by ‘growth’ 22 times and ‘economy’ 12 times.

“I will immediately activate the Emergency Economic Response Task Force with the determination to fight the recession,” Lee said. “We will revive the virtuous cycle of the economy by revitalizing the national finances.”

Lee emphasized the need for “a country that grows and develops strongly again,” stating, “Fair growth, which creates new growth engines and shares the opportunities and results of growth, will open the door to a better world.”

He promised to invest heavily in and support high-tech industries, such as AI and semiconductors, and to transition to a renewable energy-centered society in response to the climate crisis.

## 'Ending division and becoming market-oriented government'

The president emphasized: “We need to transform our growth and development strategy for sustainable growth. We must move toward balanced development, a fair growth strategy and a fair society.





President Lee Jae Myung receives applause during the oath of office inauguration ceremony for the 14th president at the National Assembly in Yeouido, Seoul, on June 4.

“We will create a country where culture blossoms,” Lee said. “We will grow Korea’s cultural industry. By actively supporting culture and the arts, we will become a cultural powerhouse that will rewrite the world standard for content and emerge as a top five global soft power.”

Lee also emphasized his commitment to national unity, saying: “I will be the president who ends the politics of division. Let’s send the old ideologies to the museum of history. I will use Park Chung-hee’s policies and Kim Dae-jung’s policies without distinction if they are necessary and useful.”

Lee characterized his administration as a pragmatic, market-oriented government, saying: “We will not be a government that controls and manages but a government that supports and encourages. We will change regulations to be negative-oriented to ensure creative and proactive business activities.

“We will never allow anyone to profit by breaking the rules or suffer by playing by the rules, such as threatening the life and safety of the people, the legitimate rights of workers, unfairly oppressing the weak and threatening market order through unfair trading, such as stock price manipulation.”

Regarding foreign and security policy, he said: “We will turn the crisis of the global economic and security environment into an opportunity to maximize national interests through pragmatic diplomacy centered around national interests. We will strengthen cooperation between South Korea and Japan based on the strong ROK-US alliance, and approach relations with neighboring countries from the perspective of national interests and pragmatism.”

### ‘Cultural powerhouse leaping into top 5 position in global soft power’


“We will clearly establish the truth of social tragedies, such as the Sewol

ferry disaster, the Itaewon tragedy and the Osong underpass disaster, and build a safe society where people’s lives and property are not threatened,” Lee said while speaking on the importance of establishing a “safe and peaceful country.”

“With our defense spending at twice North Korea’s GDP, the world’s fifth-largest military force, and a strong deterrent based on the ROK-U.S. military alliance, we will prepare for North Korea’s nuclear weapons and military provocations, but we will also open channels of communication with North Korea and build peace on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue and cooperation,” he added.

“The past has helped the present, and the dead have saved the living,” Lee said, quoting Nobel Prize-winning author Han Kang. “And now it is our turn to become the past of the future and save the descendants of tomorrow.

“We will respond to the solemn command to blossom hope on top of deep wounds and to the fervent desire to build a completely new nation,” he added.

“Let us recognize and respect each other beyond small differences and move forward together toward a country where the people are in charge, a country where the people are happy, and toward a real Korea.” 



## Changes to overseas Korean policy: ‘We will introduce a postal voting system for overseas Koreans’

Discussed various methods, such as postal and electronic voting, like the U.S. and key OECD countries.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (7th from L, front row) poses for a photo with more than 150 teachers from 64 Hangeul schools in 18 countries across Europe at the European Council of Hangeul Schools' teacher training on May 16.

Since the inauguration of President Lee Jae Myung, overseas Korean policy has marked a significant turning point in its direction and concrete implementation measures. Since his presidential campaign, President Lee has systematically presented policies to ensure the practical rights of overseas Koreans, foster future generations and improve administrative convenience. In particular, he has clearly presented the introduction of a postal voting system for overseas Koreans as a top priority for his term in office, arousing great expectations among the overseas compatriot community.

### Postal voting to be introduced to ensure overseas citizens' right to vote

Despite having the right to vote, overseas citizens have consistently been challenged by the difficulty of actually participating in the process. Currently, overseas Koreans can register to vote via email or postal vote, but to actually cast their vote, they must travel long distances to vote in person at a diplomatic mission

polling station.

This has resulted in low voter participation rates, and diaspora communities have consistently called for reforms to ensure real suffrage. As major developed countries, such as the United States and Canada, have already introduced various methods, such as mail-in voting, fax, email and webpage voting, there have been many calls for Korea to introduce mail-in voting and electronic voting through amendments to the Public Official Election Act.

Recognizing this reality, Lee listed “improving voting rights, including promoting the introduction of a postal voting system for overseas Koreans,” as a top priority in his presidential campaign manifesto. He pledged to actively push for the revision of the law and the introduction of the system within his term.

In fact, overseas Korean organizations, such as the Overseas Koreans Voters Association, have petitioned for the introduction of a postal voting system, and related bills have been proposed by political parties, but in the past, they have been unsuccessful due to a lack of political consensus and controversies over the reliability of postal voting. However, now that the president has made a direct pledge and expressed his intention to proceed, the overseas community has high expectations that concrete discussions and legislation will materialize.



## Fostering next generation of compatriots and strengthening solidarity with overseas Korean communities

President Lee's overseas Korean policy is not just about improving the voting system. Another key task is to foster the next generation of overseas Koreans and strengthen solidarity with the overseas community. The plan is to expand support for local educational institutions, such as Hangeul schools and Korean schools, and to support the next generation of overseas Koreans in cultivating their national identity and strengthening their global capabilities through various programs, such as scholarships, invitational training in Korea and activating global networks. This will help the next generation of Koreans maintain their ties to their homeland and raise the profile of the Korean people around the world.

The administration is also focusing on strengthening solidarity with the Korean diaspora. The emphasis is on creating channels for the Korean diaspora to actually participate in Korea's policy-making process and a shift in perspective to respect Korean diaspora as a "subject" rather than an "object" of policy. This reflects a policy philosophy that goes beyond mere support to enable the Korean diaspora to actively participate as partners in the future and growth of Korea.

## Protecting safety and rights, innovation in administrative and consular services

Protecting the rights of overseas Koreans is also one of the president's important pledges. He promised to improve the prevention and response system for overseas crises, incidents and accidents. To this end, he said he will increase the crisis response capabilities of overseas missions, strengthen cooperation with local police and institutions, systematize emergency communication networks, and increase the budget and manpower to protect overseas Koreans. In fact, the establishment of a system that can quickly respond to incidents and accidents that occur overseas is highly demanded by the compatriot community.

In addition, innovation in administrative and consular services for the convenience and safety of overseas Koreans is also considered an important change. The plan is to improve the online consular service system and simplify the procedures for passport issuance and various administrative services so that overseas Koreans can receive convenient support anytime and anywhere. Other initiatives include applying for services through mobile apps, expanding the number of support centers in overseas missions and introducing a service quality evaluation system. This is expected to lead to administrative innovations that the overseas Korean community can practically experience.

## Expectations and concerns of overseas community on institutional changes

Lee's overseas Korean policy can be summarized as strengthening all-around support to ensure substantive rights, fostering the next generation of Koreans, protecting safety and rights, and innovating administrative services. The overseas compatriot community is hopeful that the introduction of postal voting will increase voter participation and help to reduce costs.

In fact, as of 2023, there are 7.08 million overseas Koreans and 1.97 million



This photo shows an overseas voting station at the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Manhattan, New York, on May 20, the first day of overseas voting for the 21st presidential election.

overseas voters aged 18 and over who are eligible to vote, but under the existing system, the actual voting participation rate is less than 10 percent. The introduction of postal voting is seen as a realistic alternative to overcome these limitations.

However, there are still concerns about the trustworthiness of postal voting, proxy voting and false declarations, as well as unreliable postal systems, which can lead to the loss of ballots or delayed delivery. Certain circles in politics are calling for caution in introducing the system. However, the Korean diaspora is hopeful that substantial changes will be made this time, given Lee's understanding of the problems on the ground and his strong commitment to real systemic change.

## Policy transformation working for coexistence of Korea and diaspora

The Lee administration's overseas Korean policy heralds sweeping changes, including the guarantee of the right to vote through the introduction of a postal voting system for overseas Koreans, fostering the next generation of Koreans, protecting safety and rights, and innovating administrative services. This is an expression of the government's intention to recognize overseas Koreans as important assets of the Republic of Korea and to put coexistence and solidarity with the compatriot community at the core of its policies. It will be interesting to see how President Lee's pledges will be implemented in practice and what positive changes they will bring to the lives of the Korean diaspora. 🇰🇷



## To overseas Koreans: ‘We would appreciate your interest in current issues, such as dual citizenship’

Pledge to ‘listen to compatriot voices and treat them as policy partners’

With the inauguration of President Lee Jae Myung, Korean Americans expressed great expectations for the new president, calling on him to unite the country domestically, strengthen the U.S.-South Korea alliance and resolve tariff issues.

“The impeachment and the political vacuum that followed have divided Korea, and I hope that President Lee Jae Myung will begin to heal the country,” said Steve Kang, chair of the Board of Public Works in Los Angeles, which is home to the largest Korean American community in the United States.

“Even after President Trump took office in the U.S. (in January), there was no leadership in South Korea, so there was no communication between the leaders, and I hope that President Lee Jae Myung will actively engage in dialogue with the U.S. side to further strengthen the U.S.-South Korea alliance,” Kang added.

“I know that negotiations on the tariff issue have also been delayed, and there are concerns about the economic impact on South Korea, but as large companies have made many investment promises in the U.S. and have laid a good foundation, if President Lee Jae Myung visits the White House and makes an active appeal, we can find a win-win solution. Above all, it is urgent and necessary for the leaders of the U.S. and South Korea to communicate with each other.”

### Strengthen U.S.-South Korea alliance, resolve tariffs

Lee Myung-seok, president of the Korean American Association of Greater New York, said, “I hope President Lee Jae Myung will work to strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance, and the Korean American community will also play a role in this process.

“Overseas Koreans have contributed to Korea’s economic development by sending large amounts of remittances to their home countries, but it is unfortunate that the perception of Korean Americans in Korea has



President Lee Jae Myung (5th from L, back row) poses for a photo with leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) and invited countries at the G7 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada, on June 17.

not been very good in recent years,” Lee continued. “I hope you will pay attention to current issues, such as the rights of Korean Americans and the issue of dual citizenship.

“It is very unfortunate for Korean Americans that we are living in a disorienting time when the country and people are unable to unite and are divided,” said Ahn Soo-hwa, president of the Korean Association of Maryland. “I hope that the situation in our homeland will be resolved so that we can live in this country with pride and dignity.”

Choi Kyung-shin (57), who owns a restaurant business near Washington, D.C., said: “My friends and relatives in Korea are particularly worried about the U.S. tariffs. I hope that President Lee will meet with President Trump as soon as possible and come up with a good solution.

“The political turmoil in South Korea also made the Korean American community uneasy, and I hope that President Lee can bring about social stability and unity,” Choi added.

### Listen to the voices of Korean diaspora

There have been calls for the president to listen more closely to the voices of the Korean American community and strengthen cooperation with compatriot

First lady Kim Hea Kyung (R), who is visiting Canada with President Lee Jae Myung for the G7 Summit, greets the Western Canadian compatriot community at a dialogue with the Calgary Korean Association on June 17.



communities.

"We should treat the Korean diaspora in the U.S. as policy partners, not just manage and control them according to our political interests," said Kim Dong-seok, president of the Korean American Grassroots Conference (KAGC). "We shouldn't see compatriots as routes to political power, and even if Korean politics is divided, we should encourage the diaspora to unite in the U.S. to form one community."

Even as Koreans living in the United States, we are eager to see our homeland become better and always have good things," said Robert Ahn, president of the Korean American Federation of Los Angeles. "I hope that the hearts of the overseas Koreans who voted seeking new hope will be conveyed to the president.

"I sincerely hope that he will listen to the voices of the people, the voices of the field and the voices of our overseas Koreans, and that he will be remembered as a president who will leave office five years from now with everyone's respect," Ahn added.

Steve Lee, president of the Korean American Community Association of Greater Washington, said, "With a long history of immigration, the Korean community in the U.S. has become more second-generation and more centered on American life, but we are still Korean. I hope the government can give us direction on how we can be more helpful and closer to Korea."

### Continued interest and support for Korean language education

"I still want people to understand that we and our children are going to live in the United States in the future," Lee said. "Jews who have adapted well to American society say, 'We are Jews, but let's be Jews in America,' and we need to find ways to be Koreans in America. If the government helps us, we will be able to do more for Korea, and that will ultimately help our diaspora community and our country."

"With the establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and Cuba in 2024, the first Sejong Academy was opened in the capital city of Havana," said Jeong Ho-hyun, director of the Sejong Academy in Havana, Cuba. "I feel that when Korea is democratic and stable, Korean language education in foreign countries becomes more vibrant and naturally raises the country's profile.

"I would like to ask President Lee to continue his interest and support for Korean language education and learners so that we can establish Korea as a proud nation in the world," he said.

Expectations are also growing among the Korean diaspora for the introduction of a mail-in voting system for overseas Koreans, which was included in the presidential campaign. The Korean diaspora has been raising concerns about the current system, which makes it difficult for them to participate in voting, but no clear solution has yet been found.

"Improving the overseas voting system, including the introduction of postal voting, will result in significant budgetary savings," said Kim Jum-bae, president of the United Korean Association in Africa and Middle East. The idea is to reduce the cost and administrative burden of the existing overseas voting methods (such as in-person voting at diplomatic missions) and make it more convenient for more overseas Koreans to participate in voting. Kim emphasized that such improvements will ensure that overseas Koreans' right to vote is practically guaranteed and that the national budget can be spent more efficiently.

Kwak Sang-yeol, co-chair of the Overseas Korean Voters Organization, also emphasized, "Overseas Koreans' demand for the guarantee of basic rights under the Constitution is a natural right."

He pointed out that although the right to vote is a fundamental right stipulated in the Constitution, the current system, which makes it difficult for overseas Koreans to participate in voting, limits their ability to exercise their right in practice, and expressed the need to improve the system, such as introducing a postal voting system. 🗳️



## 2,600 next-generation Koreans from 70 countries visit homeland to trace their roots

Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training hosted by OKA begins  
June 17

The 2025 Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training officially began June 17, with more than 2,600 next-generation Koreans living in more than 70 countries around the world visiting the homeland to discover their roots through historical and cultural experiences.

The program is hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) and organized by its affiliate organization, the Overseas Korean Cooperation Center (Director Kim Young-geun). More than 240 next-generation Koreans from 26 countries attended the opening ceremony of the first training program at the Hyatt Hotel in Yeongjongdo, Incheon. More than 2,600 next-generation Koreans from more than 70 countries around the world are expected to participate in this year's training, which will continue until Aug. 17.

### Nine one-week training sessions will be held until Aug. 17

The nine one-week training sessions for overseas

Korean youth (ages 15 to 18) and young adults (ages 18 to 25) will be held for a total of 270 participants per session.

In particular, this year's training will be held on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonization and will feature a variety of programs to help participants grow into the next generation of talented individuals who will contribute to the development of the global Korean community, based on the three core values of Koreanity (Korean identity), "globality" and connectivity.

Identity is about fostering Korean identity and pride, globality revolves around promoting the bond between overseas and domestic Koreans, and connectivity focuses on contributions to the empowerment of global Koreans and the shared prosperity of humanity.

### OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk: 'You will be leaders of next generation'

In his opening remarks, OKA Commissioner Lee said: "The 7 million overseas Koreans around the world have not been as well networked as the Jewish, Chinese and Indian communities, but now that Korea is doing well, you have grown up on the foundation that your fathers and grandfathers struggled for. It is time to grow our influence as a people, and that is also the purpose behind the establishment of the OKA.



Participants pose for a photo with the Korean flag in both hands at the opening ceremony.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk gives opening remarks.

“The Future Leaders Conference held in May is also organized by the OKA,” Lee added. “In the near future, you will be the next generation of leaders.

“Making friends during the training program is the beginning of network formation. I wish you a successful and safe event without any accidents.”

Kim Young-geun, director of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center, said: “We hope that through this training, you will be able to see, hear and experience the history and power of Korea firsthand, enhance your understanding of your home country and grow into global talents with pride as Koreans.”

### Korean youth discover ‘roots of identity’ on Korean soil

The next generation of overseas Korean youth from more than 70 countries around the world embarked on a six-day, seven-night journey to Korea to discover who they are and where they came from. The program consisted of visits to major historical sites and industrial sites in the Chungcheong, Gangwon and Seoul metropolitan areas.

On June 18, the sun was beating down on Cheonan Independence Hall in South Chungcheong Province. Youths dressed in matching uniforms stood side-by-side, their faces filled with reverence. In front of a large flag, they honored their country’s independence and sacrifices.

The teenagers who visited the Seodaemun Prison History Hall in Seoul were also deeply moved. “It was heartbreaking to look through the records of the inmates,” said Nam Hye-rin (18) from Mexico, with tears in her eyes.

On the 80th anniversary of Korea’s liberation, they were reminded of the footsteps of those who sacrificed themselves for the country’s independence.

Visiting Jeongnim Temple’s stone pagoda and the tomb of King Muryeong in Gongju, the youth were awed by the beauty and refined cultural heritage of ancient Baekje.

### Inspirational classroom formed not by factories and exhibition halls but by Korea itself

The delegates were able to experience not only the history but also the current technology and industry of Korea. At the Samyang “ramen” factory in Wonju, Gangwon Province, the group toured an automated production line for “buldak” fried noodles. At the Songdo biocluster in Incheon, they saw a laboratory for vaccine research and a bioreactor, dozens of meters high, which caused some attendees to say, “I want to be a bioscientist rather than a doctor in the future.”

At Hyundai Motor Studio, they experienced autonomous driving technology firsthand in an electric car and said: “I didn’t realize Korean automotive technology was so advanced. It made me see Korea differently.”

In Gangwon Province, they visited the Hanji Theme Park to experience making traditional “hanji.” The youth showed off their palm-sized pieces of traditional patterned hanji to each other and felt the history and soul of the paper through the experience. Participants who visited Ojukheon and Seorak Mountain were fascinated by Korea’s traditional spiritual culture that blends nature, history and religion.

The youth toured the Incheon port during their trip to the Seoul metropolitan and surrounding areas, where they were reminded of their diasporic identity by feeling the vestiges of the late Joseon Dynasty’s enlightenment period. At the Incheon Maritime Museum, they experienced the development of Korea’s maritime logistics through a 3D simulator, and the cutting-edge research facilities at the Songdo Biocluster shocked and inspired them.

### A trip that connects identity with the future

On the last day of the program, a high school in Incheon, South Korea, became a lively place of interaction as students played traditional games with their peers. “I feel like I’ve made genuine friends,” they exclaimed, symbolizing that this was not just a visit but the beginning of a connection.

The 2025 Invitational Training is not just a tourist program; it is an educational journey to engrave “unified roots” in the hearts of Korean youth living in various countries and to connect their identity and future. Korea is no longer just their home country but a “homeland with which to build the future together.” 장



# Former student soldier played leading role in development of homeland

## Park Byung-heon, former head of Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan)

**Raised 52.5 billion won in donations from Korean Japanese toward successful hosting of 1988 Seoul Olympics**

The Overseas Koreans Agency has selected Park Byung-heon (1928-2011), former head of the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan), as its June Overseas Korean of the Month for his leadership in the Korean community and contributions to his homeland.

A native of Hamyang, South Gyeongsang Province, Park moved to Japan in 1939 at the age of 12 and, starting with the youth movement after liberation, led Mindan and dedicated himself to the advancement of Korean rights in Japan and the development of his homeland.

Under the oppression of the Japanese occupation, living in another country was not just about adapting to a different language and lifestyle. Protecting his identity and not forgetting his people was a struggle in itself. After graduating from a small school in Tokyo, he worked in a factory and struggled through vocational school. Immediately after liberation, he became involved in the nationalist movement, starting with the Youth Alliance for the Promotion of Korean National Reconstruction, a youth organization for Koreans in Japan. This choice soon became a watershed moment that led him to a position of leadership in the Korean Japanese community.

### Formation of Japanese Student Volunteer Army during Korean War

When the Korean War broke out in 1950, he was a 22-year-old university student. As a student at Meiji University, he became a member of the committee that promoted the creation of a volunteer army to join the Korean War effort in his homeland, and he willingly volunteered to serve as one of the first 78 members of the "Korean Japanese Student Volunteer Force."



Park Byung-heon, former head of the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan)

His first combat assignment was the Incheon landing. He was assigned to the 10th Army Group, which included the U.S. 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division. When the student volunteers insisted on being deployed to the front lines, the U.S. military created the March 1st Independent Infantry Unit, which was not originally in the unit formations, but it was disbanded in November 1950, when China's People's Liberation Army entered the war and the Allies shifted to a rear-guard action.

The disbandment of the unit meant that it would soon be withdrawn, but Park refused and was invited by the ROK Army Headquarters, which was short of senior officers at the time, to take the cadet selection test, which he passed and was commissioned as an army major. He served

as a platoon commander during the Battle of Yongmunsan, which helped stabilize the front line and halt the Chinese offensive.

After returning to Japan following the armistice, he erected a monument to the Japanese Student Volunteer Army in Subong Park in Incheon in 1979 to recognize the efforts of the Japanese compatriots to defend their homeland, and after becoming the head of the Mindan, he and his comrades erected a monument in front of the Mindan Central Headquarters in Tokyo.

### Led establishment of Korean Japanese Investment Association and Shinhan Bank

He served as a leader of the Korean Japanese community, rising from general secretary to vice president and then president of Mindan, where he conducted various support activities for national unity and the development of his homeland.

At the 1970 Osaka Expo in Japan, he served as the secretary-

general of the Japan-Korea Expo Sponsorship Committee, which was organized to build a Korean pavilion, and collected \$700,000 in donations that exceeded the total budget for the pavilion.

In addition to the fundraising campaign, he organized the Inviting Families from the Homeland to Japan program to provide comfort for his people back in Korea, inviting a total of 9,710 people to visit Japan six times during the expo. If you count the family members who traveled separately from the homeland, the total number of people who visited Japan was more than 12,000.

He additionally organized the Home Country Family Invitation to Japan program to comfort the people of his home country, which brought 12,000 people to the expo.

As a result of his efforts, the Korean pavilion attracted 6.25 million visitors, attracting the second-best attendance among foreign pavilions after the United States.

Elected as the 38th president of Mindan in 1985, he served as honorary chairman of the sponsorship committee, which was formed to support the successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, raising 52.5 billion won (US\$39 million) for his home country. The money was used to build Olympic venues, including gymnastics, swimming and tennis venues, as well as the Olympic Park Hotel, which helped make the Games a success.

In 1987, with the Seoul Olympics around the corner, he proposed the Overseas Korean Representatives' Conference to help overseas Koreans around the world work together and gathered 303 Korean leaders from around the world in Tokyo. The meeting became the basis for the World Korean Association Conference, which is now hosted annually by the OKA.

Based off his success in Japan, Park was also active in the economic and regional development of Korea.

### **Led Overseas Korean Representatives Conference, also supported scholarship programs**

In 1973, with his brothers, he founded Daesung Electric, an electronics company in the Guro Industrial Complex, and contributed to Korea's industrialization by bringing in advanced technology and capital from Japan, and led the establishment of the Korean Japanese Investment Association and Shinhan Bank, contributing to the investment and financial development of Korean businesspeople in their home country.

In addition, 12,000 cherry trees donated to his hometown of Hamyang-gun in 1987 were planted at the foot of Baekun Mountain (a 16-kilometer stretch) and led to the establishment of the Baekunsan Cherry Blossom Festival, which attracts many tourists every year and has contributed to the development of the local community.

He also established the Unam Scholarship Foundation, which provided scholarships to 395 youths from his hometown, and provided financial support for the development of his hometown and



Park Byung-heon (C), former head of the Mindan, was a leading organizer of the 'Overseas Korean Representatives' Conference, the predecessor to World Korean Association Conference.




Park Byung-heon is seen here reunited with his mother in his hometown in 1951 while serving in the Korean War as a student soldier.

the training of future generations, such as providing learning equipment for elementary schools and funding for school trips.

In honor of his contributions, the government awarded him the Samiljang Medal in 1975, the Order of Civil Merit Peony Medal in 1979, the Cheongryong Medal of the Order of Sport Merit in 1989 and the Order of Civil Merit Mugunghwa Medal in 1994.

"As the spiritual pillar of Mindan, Park Byung-heon was a true national leader who dedicated his life to contributing to his homeland while protecting the identity and rights of overseas Koreans," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. "In honor of June's National Veterans Month and the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan, we have selected him as this month's Overseas Korean of the Month for his active participation in the Korean War, investment in and support of his homeland, and more."

The OKA recognizes and announces the Overseas Korean of the Month every month by identifying compatriots who have contributed to the development of Korea or raised the profile of Koreans in their countries of residence. In March, Kim Pyeong-jin (1926-2007), former president of the Korea Development Association, was honored; in April, Hong Myung-ki (1934-2021), former chairman of the M&L Hong Foundation; and in May, Lim Chun-taek (1903-1985), a patriot of the independence movement. 



## OK-BIZ helps Korean SMEs expand overseas

OKA and Busan hold World Korean Business Forum on June 9

A forum to explore cooperation between the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK-BIZ), comprised of overseas Korean businessmen and buyers, and Korean small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) was held in Busan on June 9.

The Overseas Koreans Agency and Busan Metropolitan City (Mayor Park Hyung-jun) held the first World Korean Business Forum at the Lotte Hotel in Busan on the theme of “How to Revitalize Business to Build a Global Korean Economic Zone.”

The event was attended by OKA Deputy Commissioner Byun Chul-hwan and Deputy Mayor for Future Innovation of Busan Kim Kwang-hoe, as well as more than 100 people from small and medium-sized enterprises.

“The OKA is accelerating the Hansang Economic Zone initiative, which utilizes the network of overseas Korean businessmen around the world to support domestic companies’ overseas expansion,” Byun said in his opening remarks. “Through this forum and export counseling, we hope to strengthen the win-win network between overseas Korean companies and domestic SMEs, and explore joint responses and growth strategies in the global economic environment. With the participation of overseas buyers and advisers from overseas Korean businesses, it will be a place for Busan’s SMEs to open up new markets.”

In his welcoming remarks, Kim said, “Amid the rising uncertainty in the global economy, we look forward to finding new breakthroughs with local companies and overseas Korean businesspeople through this forum.”

At the forum, professor Lee Jin-young of Inha University delivered a keynote presentation on “The Future of the Global Hansang Economic Zone - The Next Generation Platform Connecting the Region to the World.”

“The strategic partnership between Busan’s specialized industries, such as K-food and K-beauty, and Hansang is urgent,” he said, referring to overseas Korean merchants and emphasizing



OKA Deputy Commissioner Byun Chul-hwan (4th from L) and Deputy Mayor of Busan Kim Kwang-hoe (5th from L) pose for a photo ahead of the forum.

the need for cooperation to expand the global ecosystem centered on technology and creativity.

In the panel discussion that followed, Jang Jeong-jae, head researcher at the Busan Institute; Kwon Do-gyeom, head of the Busan Regional Headquarters of the Korea International Trade Association; and Hong Soo-yeon, adviser to OK-BIZ, discussed practical ways to cooperate.

Following the forum, a full-scale export counseling session was held June 10. OK-BIZ advisers, comprised of overseas Korean businessmen, and 50 overseas buyers invited by Busan, gathered at Lotte Hotel in the southeastern city to hold one-on-one business meetings with 138 local SMEs.

Following the appointment of more than 180 OK-BIZ advisers in August last year, the OKA selected three regions -- the city of Busan, North Jeolla Province and South Jeolla Province -- as partner local governments to help SMEs expand overseas.

The OKA and the city of Busan said that using this event as a starting point, they will utilize the overseas Korean business network to enhance the export competitiveness of local companies and strengthen the foundation for sustainable economic cooperation. 📺

## Support for overseas expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises through compatriot network (OK-BIZ)

OKA-Busan hold export consultation meeting in Busan; 138 SMEs had one-on-one consultations with overseas buyers



Domestic SMEs and overseas buyers hold one-on-one business consultations at the 2025 SME Export Consultation held at Lotte Hotel in Busan on June 10.

The 2025 Export Consultation Meeting was held at Lotte Hotel in Busan on June 10 to support Korean SMEs' overseas expansion through collaboration with overseas Korean businesspeople.


The event was co-hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency and Busan Metropolitan City, and organized by the Busan Economic Promotion Agency and the Busan Overseas Trade Office. In particular, 20 businesspeople from the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK-BIZ) and 30 overseas buyers were invited to hold one-on-one customized consultations with 138 promising SMEs in Busan. The consultation items ranged from industrial goods, such as shipbuilding equipment and machinery parts, to consumer goods, such as cosmetics and household goods, all of which received high interest from the participants.

"This is my second export counseling session in Korea," said Jose Miguel Longueira, CEO of a Chilean auto parts company. "We signed a formal contract for raincoats during last year's visit and are currently working on a contract with a cosmetics company." At this day's event, he held an export consultation with LY (CEO Yoon Tae-hwan), a small and medium-sized automotive parts company in Busan.

"Hansang Korean merchants abroad should serve as a digital bridge between local consumers and K-brands by converting offline distribution to online connectivity," said OK-BIZ adviser Hong Soo-yeon, who runs a high-end food store in Paris, France, and is building a European marketing platform for K-beauty and K-food.

Last year, 37 overseas Korean companies from the United States, China, Japan and Vietnam and 117 Busan companies were connected through the program, generating about US\$57 million through the export consultations.

This year, the OKA is expanding export support based on its global network of overseas Korean businesses in the Americas (Canada and Peru), Europe (France, Italy and the Czech Republic), Asia (India and the Philippines), Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) and Africa and the Middle East (South Africa).

The Busan consultation is part of the "Hansang Economic Zone" initiative being promoted by the OKA. The initiative was officially announced at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta, U.S., in April and aims to jointly respond to global economic uncertainties by strengthening links between domestic Korean companies and overseas Korean businesses. 



## ‘There should be systemic efforts to include marginalized Sakhalin compatriots’

Policy debate at National Assembly co-organized by Democratic Party office and compatriot organizations

A policy forum on the systemic inclusion of the historically marginalized Sakhalin diaspora was held at the National Assembly on June 18, marking the 80th anniversary year of Korea’s liberation and the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan.

Co-organized by Democratic Party lawmakers Lee Jae-kang and Yang Moon-seok and the Korean International Network (KIN), the forum focused on hearing the voices of the Sakhalin diaspora and identifying the new government’s policy direction and legislative tasks for the National Assembly.

“I hope that the issues discussed today will lead to responsible policies and effective legislation so that the pain that has been hidden for so many years can be healed,” Rep. Lee Jae-kang said in his remarks. “I will be at the forefront of making sure the lives of the Sakhalin compatriots are no longer a lonely struggle but a journey of solidarity that the national community walks together.”

Rep. Yang Moon-seok said, “I will strive for continuous and concrete policy support so that each and every Sakhalin compatriot can enjoy a respectable and stable life in this country.”

The discussion comprehensively covered the issues of the permanent return and resettlement support for Sakhalin compatriots, analysis of similar cases in Japan, and policy suggestions from relevant ministries and compatriot organizations.

Dean of the College of Humanities at Sakhalin State University Lim Elvira, Korean Association of Sakhalin President Soon Ok Park and Sakhalin Korean Youth Association President Sergei Lee gave a presentation, in which they said, “The Sakhalin compatriot community is still in an institutional blind spot” and called for “a more all-encompassing and sustainable policy framework.” They called for a more systematic approach by the government, saying, “The post-return generation needs



The Overseas Koreans Agency’s Director of Overseas Koreans Policy Lee Ji-sung (2nd from R) explains the agency’s policies at the policy forum for the inclusion of Sakhalin compatriots on June 18.

support for identity restoration and cultural and linguistic adaptation.

“When the first generation of Sakhalin compatriots passes away, there is a problem that the second or third generation wants to return to their home country permanently but cannot come to Korea due to legal regulations and other conditions,” Lim said, emphasizing the urgent need for measures to address this.

Professor Paichadze Svetlana from Hokkaido University in Japan analyzed the cases of permanent returnees to Japan from Sakhalin and China, and said, “Japan’s policy shows the importance of administrative consistency and integration support from the very beginning stages of returnee resettlement.”

### ‘Establishing policy foundation for Sakhalin compatriots through special legislation and surveys’

The discussion centered on how the Overseas Koreans Agency plans to improve the support system for Sakhalin compatriots returning to Korea in 2024. Yoon Yeo-sang, director of the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, participated as the head researcher and presented her findings.

In Yoon’s presentation of the “Plan for improving the support system for permanently returned Sakhalin Koreans,” she revealed that since 2024, the OKA has begun to improve the support system in order to stabilize the settlement of permanently returned Sakhalin Koreans and strengthen their rights and interests by focusing on short-term tasks that can be realized in the next one to three years.

Speakers and panelists pose for a photo with co-organizers Lee Jae-kang and Yang Moon-seok of the Democratic Party of Korea at the policy forum for the inclusion of Sakhalin compatriots held at the National Assembly on June 18.



The plan contains specific and practical improvements that can be implemented within the scope of the current system and institutional structures.

The core of the policy direction is the establishment of a legal framework, a fact-finding survey and an integrated data-based management system. To this end, the implementation of the “Special Law on Support for Sakhalin Compatriots” will be scrutinized in detail, and a system will be established to integrate relevant survey and administrative data that are currently in different locations into a single system.

The functions of related organizations, currently centered on the OKA and the Korean Red Cross, will be made more efficient. At the same time, cooperation networks with local governments, Sakhalin diaspora organizations and local private sector organizations will be strengthened. In this process, the focus will be on actively collecting and resolving the difficulties and complaints of Sakhalin compatriots at home and abroad and those involved in the field.

### ‘Implementing support for resettlement; expanding integrated support for housing, medical care, mental health’

In order to provide practical support, the resettlement support system will be supplemented with housing, medical, language and cultural support for permanently returned Sakhalin compatriots. In addition to expanding the supply of public rental housing, the program will promote the realization of initial resettlement subsidies, expand medical support for the elderly and introduce new psychological/social integration programs.

To address language barriers and help them adapt to the culture, Korean language classes will be held in local communities, translation and interpretation services will be expanded, and Russian-language guides and leaflets will be produced and distributed. In addition, the government will study the feasibility of building a historical memorial and cultural center to remember the history of the Sakhalin diaspora and pass it on to future generations, and will prepare for its opening in consultation with relevant organizations.

Access to information will also be improved. The “Sakhalin Compatriots Support Platform” will be piloted, which will integrate relevant information from the national government and local governments, and will operate a dedicated one-stop service center to respond to common inquiries, including immigration procedures, citizenship acquisition and administrative support. The goal is to minimize the number of individual service requests and provide quicker and more accurate services to compatriots.

### ‘Considering creation of historical and cultural memorial space for Sakhalin diaspora’

Looking eight years ahead toward a long-term improvement plan, Yoon suggested, “Resettlement support should not only include housing and livelihood support but also establish a tentatively named Sakhalin support foundation, a social integration training center and regional support centers under the OKA in order to divide roles and establish a service support system for each stage of resettlement.”

In the general discussion, OKA Director of Overseas Koreans Policy Lee Ki-sung, National Association of Sakhalin Returnees Chair Kwon Kyung-seok, Association of Koryo-Saram President Jung Young-soon, Duksoo Law Firm lawyer Cho Young-kwan and officials from the Ministry of Justice presented various proposals to improve the system.

“As this year marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Korea, we have a greater sense of historical responsibility to the Sakhalin compatriots and will provide them with broader and deeper support, whether they live in Sakhalin or stay in Korea,” OKA Director Lee Ki-Sung said.

“We will continue to expand the number of permanent returnees and redouble our efforts to ensure that the OKA, which oversees the support of compatriots living in Korea, is able to help those who have returned from Sakhalin to live honorably in the country.”

Meanwhile, the “Special Law on Support for Sakhalin Compatriots,” which came into force in 2021, provides a legal basis for the return of the first generation of Sakhalin compatriots and their immediate relatives, and stipulates that the state is responsible for formulating and implementing relevant policies, including resettlement support. As a result, 270 people are expected to return home permanently this year. 🇰🇷



Kim Jum-bae, chairman of Global Hansang Dream

## ‘We will do our best to nurture next generation of Korean talents’

### Hansang in the world, nurturing our people for the future, the new vision of Global Hansang Dream



Kim Jum-bae, chairman of Global Hansang Dream's board of directors

The Global Hansang Dream recently held its 18th regular board meeting and elected Kim Jum-bae (68), president of AI Kaus Overseas Trading Co. in Oman and Chungwan, to the position of chair. Global Hansang Dream was founded in 2016 by a group of leading CEOs from the Korean diaspora participating in the World Korean Business Convention. With the aim of elevating the tradition and vision of Hansang to the level of heritage, and creating a world where all Koreans can fulfill their dreams, the organization conducts scholarship programs to discover and nurture the next generation of Koreans who will be active around the world.

Kim is a key Korean merchant of Oman, who has served as the president of the Federation of Korean Associations in Asia and the Middle East, as well as the Federation of Korean Chambers of Commerce in Asia and the Middle East; the president of the Omani Chamber of Commerce; the vice chair of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council in Europe, Middle East and Africa; the president of the 20th World Korean Business Convention; the CEO of Hansang Leading; and the vice chair of Global Hansang Dream. He is

engaged in deep-sea fishing, seafood processing and shipping management in the Indian Ocean, and helps Korean businesses settle in the region. He is also contributing to the development of Korea-Africa relations by continuing the “Fountain of Peace” project to provide clean drinking water to remote areas in Africa. We interviewed Mr. Kim about his future plans.

#### First, please share your thoughts on taking office.

The second chair, Jung Young-soo, has laid the foundation for the realization of Global Hansang Dream's values and vision of challenging the spirit, honesty and love of the people. I will work with the board members to further develop the scholarship program for the next generation.

#### Please introduce the founding purpose and role of Global Hansang Dream.

Global Hansang Dream is a public benefit corporation founded on Sept. 29, 2016, by Korean merchants (Hansang, 韓商), who have been engaged in business overseas to foster the next generation of Korean talent at home and abroad. We implement support projects for the underprivileged and the next generation of Korean talent at home and abroad. We want to create a world where all ethnic Korean youth can fulfill their dreams. We aim to discover and nurture the next generation of talent in our people, serve as a platform for contributions to the Korean community and create a positive image of the Korean community through social contribution projects.

#### What is Hansang Dream's main area of activity?

Our organization's core business is scholarships, and we want to provide practical help to Korean youth around the world to fulfill their dreams. Our flagship programs include the Dream Supporters program, which provides 5 million won (US\$3,671) per year for up to 10 years to young adults aged 19-34, regardless of nationality, and the Hansang Dream Scholarship for overseas Korean high school students (1.5 million won per year) and university students (2 million won per year). It also provides scholarships for local students at the World Korean Business Convention, the “Global Hansang School”

mentoring program and an educational program called “Connecting Dreams” to support employment at home and abroad.

### Please tell us about the achievements of your scholarship programs so far

Starting with Dream Supporters, our flagship support program, we have provided a total of 237 million won to 48 young people since 2017, the year after our establishment. The Hansang Dream Scholarship, which was implemented relatively recently, in 2022, has provided a total of 75 million won to 43 young people. In addition, through the Hansang Scholarship, which provides scholarships to students in the host regions of the World Korean Business Convention, we have provided 145 million won to 134 students in seven regions as of last year. In addition, through the Connecting Dreams program, we have helped 32 unemployed youth find jobs in Korea and abroad.

### Why are successful Hansang businesspeople involved in fostering the next generation, particularly through a scholarship program?

The Global Hansang Dream was founded to fulfill the promise of the 10th item of the Hansang Business Way, “accumulate wealth in moderation and leave the wealth you accumulate to your people,” and led to Hansang directly promoting social contribution projects. Among these activities, we are focusing on scholarship programs for the underprivileged at home and abroad, education programs for overseas Korean youth on their identity as global Koreans, support programs for the next generation, and exchange programs at home and abroad to support social integration in Korea and foster future Korean talents because we recognize the importance of raising public awareness of Hansang and providing a place for overseas Koreans.

### Please tell us about your ambitions and operational plans as the third chairman

Our initial goal is to raise 10 billion won. We have accumulated nearly 2 billion won over the past nine years, but at the last meeting of the Leading CEO Forum in Atlanta, we talked about expanding our outreach by adjusting membership fees. We are currently exploring various ways to speed up the accumulation of donations, including through revising the articles of incorporation. In the end, we want Global Hansang Dream to become a central organization that fosters and supports Korean youth around the world and becomes the pride of the Hansang community.

### As a successful Korean businessman, you have led organizations such as the Federation of Korean Chambers of Commerce in Asia and the Middle East, and




Kim Jum-bae (3rd from L), then vice chairman of Global Hansang Dream, poses for a commemorative photo after delivering scholarships to students at the closing ceremony of the 22nd World Korean Business Convention in Jeonju, North Jeolla Province, on Oct. 24, 2024.

### the Federation of Korean Associations in Asia and the Middle East, and served as the president of the World Korean Business Convention, so I'm curious as to why you are so dedicated to volunteering.

Hansang are ethnic Korean businessmen who have overcome adversity in countries around the world since the days of Korea's economic difficulties. Based on their love for their people, I believe that it is our rightful mission to promote the history, tradition and vision of Hansang as the heritage of the Korean people and to strive for the development of the global community. In particular, Hansang has been at the forefront of educating our next generation, and now, as our country continues to develop dazzlingly, we must support the unlimited potential of the next generation of Korean talent and contribute to their ability to keep pace with the rest of the world.

### What initiatives do you think should be further expanded at the government (political) level to ensure that the home country and the diaspora truly coexist?

The Overseas Koreans Agency has been in existence for three years, but there is still a lack of communication and support for the diaspora. Given the fact that only 10 percent of the more than 2 million overseas voters worldwide participate in voting, there is an urgent need to improve the system to enable at least 1 million people to vote. In addition, compatriots in Asia, Africa and the Middle East are facing difficulties due to the lack of a permanent residency system and a lack of clear standards on issues such as taxation when investing back home. Proactive policies like India's NRI (Non-Resident Indian) scheme are needed to facilitate the smooth flow of overseas assets into the country. The OKA should focus more on on-the-ground administration that is demand-driven rather than supplier-driven. 



## ‘The time is right to foster next generation; second and third Andy Kims will keep coming’

‘OKA should be eyes and ears of Korean community around the world’

“It’s time to make a bold investment in second-generation Koreans. Based on the hard work and dedication of the first generation who settled in the U.S., a new generation of leaders is emerging who are distinguishing themselves in all areas of politics, economics and society. Supporting them is an investment in the future of Korea, and when we do, the second and third Andy Kims will keep coming.”

In a recent interview in Seoul, Kang Seok-hee, president of the International Foundation for Korea University, who was the first first-generation Korean American to be elected to multiple terms as the mayor of Irvine, California, made serious recommendations for expanding the role of the Overseas Koreans Agency, the new administration’s strategy for U.S.-Korea relations and the empowerment of overseas Koreans.

“As an organization that was born from the long-standing wishes of the 7 million overseas Koreans around the world, the OKA should not just be an administrative body but the eyes and ears of the global Korean community,” he said.

“We need to put structures in place to ensure that their voices are heard and that they are reflected in actual policies. This starts with building a network of dedicated Korean leaders in each region. For example, those connected to mainstream society can serve as a conduit for collecting and communicating opinions.”

He is also firm in his views on the U.S.-Korea alliance. “South Korea and the U.S. have shared blood in a close alliance for the past 75 years,” he said. “While regime change may change the way we view the U.S., the key is to maintain trust.

“There may be policy disagreements between the two countries. However, we need to narrow the differences through sincere dialogue and cooperation, and develop a win-win diplomatic strategy. The U.S.-South Korea relationship has a major impact on South Korea’s international standing across diplomacy, economy and security.”

“More than 2 million Koreans in the U.S. are active in their communities, and they are not just emigrants; they are human assets for South Korea,” he said. “The Korean government must



Kang Seok-hee and his family pose for a photo at Stanley Park during a recent trip to Vancouver, Canada.

provide real support to help them become mainstreamed into American society.”

### ‘Korea is an advanced economy, but there is still some way to go in our consciousness’

Kang also pointed to the issue of voting rights for overseas Koreans in the United States.

“The United States is a large country, and it is not uncommon to have to travel hundreds of kilometers to a polling station. The current system is too impractical. It needs to be improved in various ways to encourage active voting participation, such as through mail-in ballots.”

He emphasized that improving the voting system is more than just protecting rights but an essential device to foster a sense of national identity and belonging among overseas compatriots.

During his tenure as mayor of Irvine, Kang also received



Kang Seok-hee, president of the International Foundation for Korea University, discusses the U.S. political system and the role of overseas Koreans during a recent interview in Seoul.

overwhelming support from conservative white voters.

“Politicians need to humble themselves and look from the perspective of citizens. I spent every Wednesday talking directly to citizens, and I ran my city government by listening to every voice in the community.”

He cites the public comment system as a strength of the American political system.

“There is an institutionalized culture where citizens can speak freely for three minutes at city council meetings, and the mayor and council members must listen. It’s a system that normalizes civic engagement and builds trust in politics.”

### **‘Politics is about serving, not fighting. We need inclusive leadership’**

As an immigrant, Kang has experienced South Korea’s remarkable progress firsthand.

“Forty-eight years ago, I immigrated with the American dream. Looking back, it was a hard life, but the economic achievements that Korea has made today are remarkable. However, I think there is still a lot of room for improvement on

the software side, such as civic consciousness and political culture.”

He points out that bridging the gap between the economic hardware and the software of civic engagement is now the challenge Korea must face to join the ranks of the developed world, and it starts with politicians.

To conclude the interview, he had a special message for second-generation Koreans.

“You can grow into confident leaders in American society while maintaining your Korean identity. It’s time for you to build your future on the foundation your parents have laid.

“I plan to actively engage in human resource development and exchange programs that connect Korea and the world,” said Kang, who also began serving as chairman of the International Foundation for Korea University this year. “I will continue to do my best to build bridges between the Korean American community in the United States and my home country.”

Kang is the first first-generation Korean American to serve as an elected mayor of the U.S. He crossed the Pacific Ocean in 1977 after graduating from Korea University to follow his older brother, who was the first to go to the U.S., in pursuit of the American dream. He got a job as a salesman at Circuit City, an electronics store, and with his characteristic politeness and sincerity, he became the top salesman within four months of his arrival and the first Asian to become a manager.

As an ordinary immigrant living in the United States, it was during the 1992 Los Angeles riots that he decided to contribute to the Korean American community. He realized that the lack of response to the riots was due to the lack of political influence of Korean Americans, as Korean businesses were heavily damaged, and in 1993, he became active in the Korean American community as a board member of the Korean Heritage Scholarship Foundation. Through his work with the Federation of Korean Associations USA and the Korean Heritage Scholarship Foundation, he helped Korean Americans enter the mainstream of American society, and in 2004, he was approached by the Korean American community to run for the Irvine City Council. After much deliberation, he accepted the challenge and spent five to six hours a day canvassing the neighborhoods during the campaign, visiting more than 20,000 homes, and was elected by white conservative voters who recognized his passion and authenticity.

After earning the trust of his constituents by delivering on his promises as a city councilor, he ran for mayor of Irvine in 2008. He was reelected in 2010 with the highest percentage of the vote (64.1 percent) in Irvine’s history. 🇺🇸



# Mother's Embrace Garden in Paju, a healing space for adoptees, opens after 8 years

Congratulatory remarks by OKA Commissioner Lee: 'Adopted Koreans are valuable human assets'



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers a congratulatory speech at the 2025 Korean Adoptees Peace Festival to mark the opening of the Mother's Embrace Garden in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, on June 14.

Mother's Embrace Garden, a "memory and healing space" for overseas adoptees, officially opened June 14 in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, after more than eight years of preparation. It is a "homecoming" and a "warm embrace" for adoptees who have been missing their homeland.

The 2,224-square-meter garden is a symbolic space that is part of a camp housing site (610,000 square meters) that was once a U.S. military base. It was created in 2017 by the adoptee organization Me & Korea (CEO Kim Min-young) and the city of Paju. Construction, which was suspended due to COVID-19, resumed in 2023, with the unveiling of a mural in November last year ahead of the full opening.

The opening ceremony, which was held as part of the 2025 Korean Adoptee Peace Festival, was attended by about 300 people, comprised of 200 overseas adoptees and 100 residents of Paju.

"Adoptees are important members of the 7 million-strong overseas Korean community around the world and are valuable

human assets," said Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk in his congratulatory remarks. "The OKA recently opened a dedicated window for adoptees in Gwanghwamun, Seoul, and plans to hold the World Korean Adoptee Congress in November to further strengthen the bond between adoptees and their homeland."


The first Korean American general in the U.S. Army, Stephen Curda (Korean name: Choi Gab-san), a professor at National Louis University in the U.S., delivered a greeting on behalf of adoptees. The event also featured a touching scene in which adoptees' birth mothers, foster mothers and adoptive mothers stood on the same podium.

When a birth mother who was separated from her child in 1975 recounted her life of having to give her daughter up for adoption overseas, many of the adoptees were moved to tears as they recalled their own pain and hurt.

A foster mother who has cared for 61 children over the past 19 years and an adoptive mother who visited Korea for the first time with her adopted daughter and grandchildren also took the stage to rapturous applause.

The event also featured an exhibition at the Peace Museum with 900 photos of adoptees, including their names and stories, and a Memory Wall at the edge of the garden with the name tags of 700 adoptees.

The two-day festival, which began June 13, featured folk games, documentary screenings and musical performances. Adoptees and Paju residents played folk games and mingled together, and the Paju Civic Center screened the documentary film "To My Name," which tells the stories of adoptees.

"We expect the festival to be a space of memory and healing for the thousands of adoptees who visit Korea in search of their roots," said Kim Min-young, CEO of Me & Korea, who co-chaired the event. "We hope that the pain of mothers who gave up their children for adoption and the wounds of adoptees who had to leave their families will be healed." 

## ‘I’m excited for my first visit to my homeland with my family as a father rather than a soldier’

**Stephen Curda, first Korean American to serve as general in U.S. Army, is professor at National Louis University in the U.S.**

Stephen Curda (65, Korean name: Choi Gab-san), a professor of educational engineering at National Louis University, is the first Korean American adoptee to become a U.S. Army general. He traveled to South Korea with his family as an adoptee representative to attend the opening ceremony of the Mother's Embrace Garden in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, a "space for memory and healing" for overseas adoptees.

Born in 1960 in Iri (now Iksan), North Jeolla Province, and raised in Seoul, he was adopted to the United States at age 10. After graduating from the University of Arkansas, he joined the army as an officer and served as a platoon leader, company commander and operations officer in the U.S. Army's 2nd Division.

He then served as an adviser for the 350th Civil Affairs Command and a professor at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) before being promoted to brigadier general in 2012 and serving three years as commander of the 351st Civil Affairs Command, which performs missions, such as warfare, medical aid and facility support. In 2015, he was appointed commander of the 9th Mission Support Group (MSG), which provides civil affairs, transportation and training support for U.S. military units stationed in the Asia-Pacific region, including U.S. forces in Japan and Guam.

Even in the U.S., it's rare for a soldier to reach the rank of general. With a 0.06 percent chance, it is considered almost impossible. To achieve this as an adoptee makes this all the more special. He has led a life similar to the main character in Mr. Sunshine, Eugene Choi, and served in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

"My time as commander of the 9th Mission Support Command in support of U.S. forces in Korea and my tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan were some of the most rewarding and proudest times of my military career," he said.

While in the military, Curda attended graduate school

Professor Stephen Curda, the first Korean American to serve as a U.S. Army general




and earned a doctorate in educational psychology. After retiring from the Army in 2018, Curda was appointed secretary of veterans affairs for the state of Illinois and also served as a professor at Florida State University.

His wife, Leslie Curda, is also a professor at the University of San Diego, and together they have one son and four daughters. "This was my first trip back to my roots with my children as a father rather than a soldier," he said. "And it was a valuable opportunity to show them the culture and history of Korea firsthand."

He also has some advice for younger adoptees. "The first thing is faith. Faith in God makes a lot of things possible. Second is hard work. Whatever you do, you have to work hard and do your best. Third is education. There is no substitute for education."

When asked about the secret to his success, he was quick to point out that he "never lost the Korean spirit that runs through his veins."

"Just like our people who made something out of nothing in the 1960s and 70s and created the miracle of the Han River, I tried to do my best in everything I did. There were many difficult moments, but I tried to see them not just as pain, but as doors to new opportunities," Curda said.

Another key to his success is the power of family. "Above all, my wife and children have always believed in me and supported me. I think my success is a combination of hard work, luck and blessings from the heavens." 





## OKA appoints 'Big Star Teacher' of history communication Choi Tae-sung as first goodwill ambassador

Choi: 'I will work hard to overcome barriers between domestic Korean citizens and our compatriots'

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced on June 10 that it has appointed Choi Tae-sung, a Korean history lecturer known as the "Big Star Teacher," as a goodwill ambassador.

The appointment ceremony was held at the OKA headquarters in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon. This is the first time the OKA has selected an ambassador since its opening June 5, 2023.

The OKA said it selected Choi as an ambassador because he has been leading the way in raising overseas Korean awareness by conveying the history of overseas Korean immigrants and their contributions to their home countries to viewers in an easy-to-understand and entertaining manner in a number of Korean history lectures, including the EBS program "Choi Tae-sung's History of Korea."



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L) and Ambassador Choi Tae-sung are in attendance at the goodwill ambassador appointment ceremony for Choi at the OKA headquarters in Songdo, Incheon, on June 10.

"I was surprised to learn that the people running Hangeul Schools were local overseas Koreans," Choi said at the ceremony. "Since then, I have been thinking about the dedication and sacrifices overseas Koreans make for their home countries."

"We hope that Mr. Choi will continue to work hard as an ambassador of our organization and raise the profile of overseas Koreans," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said.

Ambassador Choi will participate in the OKA's public relations activities and events to promote the understanding of the history of overseas Koreans, as well as to raise awareness and spread empathy for overseas Korean policies.

## OKA expands 'Traveling Education for Understanding Overseas Koreans'

Lectures at 35 elementary, middle, high schools and universities, also providing education targeting public officials and general public

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced on June 9 that it is expanding its "Traveling Education for Understanding Overseas Koreans" program, which targets students in elementary, middle and high schools and universities in Korea, as well as public officials and the general public, to spread proper awareness of overseas Koreans.

In response to the increasing number of overseas Koreans living in Korea, the agency is developing educational content for public officials who directly interact with them together with the National Human Resources Development Institute. Based on this, the training will be held in the second half of the year for government employees while expanding it to the general public in areas with a high concentration of overseas Koreans. To this end, the agency will conduct a demand survey at the end of July for the second half of the training program.

The OKA is promoting education on understanding overseas



Lee Ki-sung, policy director at the OKA, lectures at Hanyang University on May 22 as part of the "Traveling Education for Understanding Overseas Koreans" program.

than 200 students, as well as a middle school in Goheung, Jeolla Province, with only 14 students. The program, which started in March, will visit a total of 35 schools by July.

"We will continue to expand educational opportunities so that students and other Korean citizens can familiarize themselves with overseas Koreans," Lee Sang-duk said.

## OKA seeks employment support for compatriots with disabilities living in Korea

MOU with Korea Employment Service for the Disabled to establish employment support system

The Overseas Koreans Agency has set out to create a stable employment environment for compatriots with disabilities living in Korea.

The OKA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Korea Employment Service for the Disabled (Director Lee Jong-sung) on June 5 at its headquarters in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon. Through the MOU, the two organizations will connect compatriots with disabilities to a dedicated job counseling center so that they can maintain their jobs and live stably, even if they had a disability before coming to Korea or acquired a disability during their stay.

To this end, the two organizations will cooperate on ▲ Activating employment support services for compatriots with disabilities living



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L, front row) poses for a photo with Lee Jong-sung (R, front row), director of the Korea Employment Service for the Disabled, after signing an MOU with officials from both organizations.

in Korea, ▲ Linking together systems owned by each organization and ▲ Sharing relevant statistics, including the employment status of compatriots with disabilities living in Korea. The MOU also states that the Korea Employment Service for the Disabled will provide professional support for employers to hire compatriots with disabilities through training on hiring people with disabilities.

“We hope that through the signing of this MOU our compatriots with disabilities will be

able to work in a better environment by fully utilizing the capabilities of both organizations,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. “The government will pay closer attention to the employment realities of compatriots with disabilities in Korea so that they will not be marginalized in the workplace.”

## OKA runs volunteer meal-serving drive for Koryo compatriots and local communities

Koryoin Global Network (KGN) members served meals to more than 500 people, including elders living alone

Koryo compatriots living in South Korea volunteered with the Overseas Koreans Agency at a welfare center for the elderly in Mapo-gu, Seoul, with a vow to maintain their roots and to contribute to the community.

On May 27, Chae Ye-jin, president of the Koryoin Global Network (KGN), an organization of Koryoin living in Korea, and members of the KGN served food and washed dishes at the Mapo Senior Citizens' Welfare Center in Mapo-gu, Seoul.

“I believe that social contribution activities for the community are not just volunteer work but the most beautiful way for Koryoin living in Korea to contribute to the people and communities of this land while maintaining our roots,” Chae said.

KGN conducts a variety of activities to connect the Koryo diaspora and the local community, including regular community service activities and the six-week “Connecting the Future” program for Korean youth and young adults, which it runs six times a year.



Lee Ki-sung (7th from L), the OKA's overseas Korean policy director, and KGN Director Chae Ye-jin (6th from L) take a commemorative photo with members before a meal.

The volunteer program was made even more meaningful by the participation of Lee Ji-sung, the OKA director of overseas Korean policy, and OKA staff members.

“The OKA will continue to engage in social contribution activities that can promote our overseas compatriots and connect them with the community,” Lee said.



- June 5: MOU signing ceremony with the Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled  
 9: World Korean Business Forum (Lotte Hotel, Busan)  
 10: Appointment ceremony of history communicator Choi Tae-sung as OKA's goodwill ambassador  
 10: World Korean Business Export Consultation (Lotte Hotel, Busan)  
 17: Opening Ceremony of the 1st Next Generation Korean Home Country Invitation Training

## OKA Announcements

### 2025 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards being held; make submissions to Korean.net by June 30

Overseas Koreans Agency opens the 27th Korean Literature Creative Studio; total prize money of 29.5 million won

The OKA is holding a contest for the 2025 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards for overseas Koreans living around the world.

The literary contest, which will be held for the 27th time this year, will run from June 4 to 30 through Korean.net. The contest will be held in three categories -- Poetry, Short Story and Essay -- under either a free theme or themes of identity, immigration experience and Hangeul school activities.

All overseas compatriots who have obtained citizenship or permanent residency in their countries of residence or have been living abroad for at least seven years are eligible to apply. However, youth (between the ages of 7 and 19) are eligible if they have obtained citizenship or permanent residency, or have been living abroad for more than five years. The 13 winners will receive a total of 29.5 million won (US\$21,700), including the grand prize of 5 million won, the second prize of 2.5 million won and the honorable mention of 1 million won.

For more information on the submission period and method, preliminary briefing sessions, judging and announcements via YouTube (youtube.com/ @OKAKOREA), please refer to the website (https://www.oka.go.kr), Korean Net and the official page (https://m.site.naver.com/11SKG), email (pms01@okocc.or.kr) or call (+82-2-3415-0144).

Since its founding in 1999, the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards have been a leading literary awards that has created a space for the creation of Korean language literature and promoted cultural communication between Koreans and overseas Koreans, and this year, for the first time, all of the winners will be invited to their home country for the awards

## 제27회 재외동포 문학상

2025. 6. 4.(수)  
~ 6.30.(월)  
23:59 (한국시간 기준)

**응모 자격**

- 거주국 내 시민권·영주권 취득, 또는 7년 이상 장기체류한 재외동포
- 단, 청소년(만 7세 이상~19세 미만)은 시민권·영주권 취득, 또는 5년 이상 장기체류한 재외동포

**공모 부문**

부문	출품 인수	1등상 금자수	1등상 원고 분량	작품 요요 서식
시	3~5편	제한 없음	제한 없음	제한 없음
단편소설	1~3편	16,000자 내외	15쪽 내외	제한 없음
수필	1~3편	5,000~ 10,000자 내외	5~10쪽 내외	제한 없음

**문의**

- 재외동포문학상 운영사무국
- 이메일: overseas2025@gmail.com
- ☎ 전화번호: +82-10-4302-1810
- 카카오톡 채널: 제27회 재외동포 문학상
- 🌐 공식 웹사이트 주소: https://m.site.naver.com/11SKG

QR코드

**시상 내역**

대 상	시	단편소설	수필	수상자별 상금
대 상	1명	1명	1명	500만원
우수상	1명	1명	1명	250만원
가 작	2명	2명	3명	100만원

**시상식 초청 행사**

- 지원 내역: 항공료, 숙박비, 식비 등 참가비 일체
- \* 항공비 왕복, 일반석으로 재외동포청 지원기준 상한액 내에서 지원
- \* 일정, 장소, 항공료 상한액은 추후 수상자 개별 통보

**접수 기간 및 방법**

- \* 기간: 2025. 6. 4.(수) ~ 6. 30.(월) 23:59(한국시간 기준)
- \* 방법: 코리아넷(korean.net) 온라인 접수
- ① 코리아넷(korean.net) 공지사항 접속
- ② 하단의 '온라인 신청 바로가기' 버튼 클릭
- ③ 신청서 작성 → 응모 작품 첨부
- ④ 저장 (제출기한 내 수정 가능)
- ⑤ 마이페이지 → 신청서 확인 → 신청 완료 (최종 제출 후 수정 불가)

**사전 설명회**

- \* 일시: 2025. 6. 13.(금) 10:00~11:00 (한국시간 기준)
- \* 주소: 재외동포청 유튜브
- (youtube.com/OKAKOREA)

**발표**

- \* 수상자 발표: 2025년 9월 중
- / 재외동포청(oka.go.kr) · 코리아넷(korean.net) · 소통24(sotong.go.kr) 홈페이지



The 27th Overseas Korean Literary Awards Poster

ceremony and various networking events. The winners will receive all expenses for participation, including round-trip airfare and accommodation.

먼저 만나면 더 좋을거야

# 노후준비 서비스

지금 바로 신청하세요!

## 서비스영역

재무, 건강, 여가, 대인관계 영역

## 제공서비스

노후준비 진단 · 상담 · 종합재무설계 ·  
교육 · 관계기관 연계

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재외동포청 출범 2주년



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재외동포청 인스타그램