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재외동포의



Window into Overseas Koreans



Special Article - 2025 World Korean Association Conference and 19th World Korean Day

Korean association presidents from 67 countries pledge unity for Korea's peace and prosperity

President Lee: 'We will protect safety of our citizens and compatriots overseas'

Special Feature - World Korean Business Forum and Export Consultation Fair

'Global Hansang business network expands its economic sphere with K-food'

'The moment you recognize what you don't know, that's when business begins'

Overseas Korean of the Month - Chairman Seo Gab-ho: 'Pioneer of investment in the homeland' and 'Spinning Mill King of Japan'



재외동포청
Overseas Koreans Agency

The AI Era: Hangeul is the answer

Hangeul, the perfect language for the digital age;
King Sejong's great legacy

On the 579th anniversary of Hangeul Day, I state this with conviction: Hangeul is the language best suited for the age of artificial intelligence.

The core of AI lies in precise communication between humans and machines. English contains many phonemes prone to pronunciation confusion, like Z and S, or L and R. Hangeul is different. It possesses a structure where one sound corresponds precisely to one character. This becomes a decisive advantage in communicating with AI. This is why Hangeul is the most suitable language for voice recognition systems, AI commands and language-based platforms.

Analyzing the principles of vocalization and descriptions of the articulatory organs contained in the Hunminjeongeum Haerye clearly reveals how scientifically King Sejong designed the script. As an ENT physician and phonetician, I understand this better than anyone. Next year, I plan to publish "The Phonetics of Hunminjeongeum," based on MRI analysis, aiming to demonstrate the scientific nature of Hangeul to the world's younger generation.

The person whom my grandfather, the scholar Choi Hyeon-bae, held in the highest regard was King Sejong the Great. Carrying on that spirit, I have led the King Sejong the Great Memorial Foundation since 2015, dedicating myself to elucidating the scientific nature of the Hunminjeongeum Jaehaehae.

Hangeul is a scientific writing system for the following reasons. First, the phonological knowledge of its creator. King Sejong designed it optimally based on his extensive knowledge of articulatory phonetics. Second, its systematic principles. Hangeul possesses a consistent system where pictographs serve as the primary principle, supplemented by the principles of adding strokes and combining characters.

Third is its phoneme-based structure. Syllables are formed by combining initial, medial and final consonants -- a structure optimized for the digital age. Fourth is its classification by place of articulation. It employs a scientific classification based on the anatomical location of the vocal organs. Finally, it accurately reflects the shape of the resonator cavity. It visually represents the actual form of the resonator cavity during vowel articulation.

There is one thing I want to make clear. The Hunminjeongeum was not a collaborative effort with the scholars of the Jiphyeonjeon.



Choi Hong-sik, chairman of the King Sejong Memorial Foundation, professor emeritus at the Yonsei University College of Medicine

It was completed solely by King Sejong. Examining the Hunminjeongeum Haerye reveals this was not the kind of work that could be created through discussion. King Sejong sent Shin Suk-ju and Seong Sam-mun to Liaodong 13 times to consult with the Chinese phonologist Huang Chan for verification. This demonstrates that King Sejong personally led the creation process while satisfying his own scholarly curiosity.

Yet today, we neglect this great legacy. Britain and France proudly teach their own scripts -- What about us? We tend to underestimate Hangeul's value precisely because it is easy to learn. Korean language education in schools must properly teach the Hunminjeongeum and King Sejong's spirit of love for his people.

The bigger problem is the indiscriminate use of English. English is being overused everywhere -- on signs, in company names and in administrative markings -- undermining the status of our own language. This is not merely a linguistic issue but a matter of identity. A national language policy and a shift in awareness among society's leaders are urgently needed.

Hangeul will develop dramatically in the future. Its potential as a digital language is limitless. We must turn this potential into reality.

On the 579th Hangeul Day, I hope we all reflect once more on the scientific nature and excellence of Hangeul. Moreover, I earnestly ask for your participation in sharing this with the world. Let us not forget the spirit of Hangeul, created by King Sejong out of love for his people. 장



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The Overseas Koreans Agency is an external agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that conducts various policies and projects to support the rights and interests of the overseas Koreans around the world and their integration into mainstream society in their countries of residence.

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

Korean association presidents from 67 countries pledge unity for Korea's peace and prosperity

OKA Commissioner Kim: 'Reflecting Korean associations' voices in policy; we will
strengthen our practical support'

Yoon Hee, president of Asian Federation, and Lee Seok-ro, president of Canadian
Federation, to be the chairs of next year's conference

The 2025 World Korean Association Conference concluded successfully on Oct. 1 at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel in Seoul, with participants pledging to unite the capabilities of the overseas Korean community for the peace and prosperity of the Republic of Korea.

Hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup), the three-day conference proceeded under the slogan "Connecting to the World with 7 Million Overseas Koreans, Illuminating the Future." Over 370 participants attended, including presidents of Korean associations from 67 countries worldwide and executives from continental federations.

"This conference reaffirmed the potential and capabilities of the global overseas Korean community," OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup said in his closing remarks. "We will do our utmost to translate the participants' voices into achievable policies."

Prior to the closing ceremony, participants held a plenary session and adopted a 10-point resolution encompassing the peace and stability of the Republic of Korea. The resolution marked the 80th anniversary of liberation by honoring the spirit of the independence movement within the overseas Korean community, and pledged to pool their capabilities for the peace and prosperity of the Republic of Korea.

It also expressed support for the successful hosting of the APEC 2025 KOREA and the realization of lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula centered on END (Exchange, Normalization of Relations, Denuclearization), pledging to strengthen civilian public diplomacy activities that raise awareness of the necessity for a peaceful reunification.

Additionally, resolutions were passed on: ▲ Cultivating the identity of next-generation compatriots and strengthening ties with their homeland, ▲ Actively cooperating to enable young overseas



OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup delivers remarks at the closing ceremony.

Korean talents to contribute to overcoming population decline and regional extinction, ▲ Improving the overseas voting system, ▲ Supporting lowering the age for dual citizenship, ▲ Proposing the establishment of Taegeukgi Day and ▲ Proposal for the World Korean Association Conference to be hosted by Korean associations.

On the previous day, Sept. 30, a Common Agenda Discussion led by the World Assembly of Korean Associations (WAKA) was held in a lively atmosphere to discuss operational plans for the World Korean Association Conference and the resolution of disputes among regional Korean associations, aiming to strengthen

solidarity among Korean associations worldwide.

During the Dialogue with the Government session, five institutions -- the Ministry of Justice, National Tax Service, National Election Commission, National Pension Service and National Folk Museum -- introduced systems related to overseas Koreans, such as nationality law, tax law, overseas voting, social security agreements and cultural artifact collection systems, and responded to participants' questions.

The Local Government-Overseas Korean Community Case Study Presentation program, introduced for the first time this year, drew significant interest as Incheon Metropolitan City, Ulsan Metropolitan City and Jeonbuk Special Self-Governing Province shared their respective overseas Korean policies and collaboration cases with Korean associations.

During the conference, the World Korean Association Conference Steering Committee held a meeting and confirmed Yoon Hee, president of the Asian Federation of Korean Associations, and Lee Seok-ro, president of the Canadian Federation of Korean Associations, as the co-chairs for next year's conference. 장

President Lee: 'We will protect safety of our citizens and compatriots overseas'

'We will pool our wisdom on lowering age for dual citizenship'; also expresses commitment to reforming overseas voting systems

"We will devote even greater effort to safeguarding the rights, interests and safety of all our citizens and compatriots abroad," President Lee Jae Myung said on Oct. 2.

Lee made these remarks while attending the 19th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony held at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel in Seoul that morning, saying, "We are all living in an era of upheaval, facing new challenges as we stand at the crossroads of a great transformation."

Lee emphasized: "However, the people of the Republic of Korea and our compatriots have always stood united in the face of crisis and remained strong in the face of challenges. If our 50 million citizens and 7 million compatriots unite as one, we will overcome this crisis and surely achieve an even greater leap forward."

This remark drew particular attention as it came amid heightened concerns within the Korean community about safety and visa issues locally, following the recent detention of Korean workers in the U.S. state of Georgia.

"It is an immense honor to share this moment with you on the 80th anniversary of liberation, a year our citizens reclaimed sovereignty, and to dream together of a brighter future for the Republic of Korea," he said. "It was the fervent patriotism of our overseas compatriots who supported the provisional government and raised funds for independence during the Japanese colonial period, which enabled us to reclaim the light that had been stolen from us."

He shared further words of encouragement, saying, "Today, our great compatriots who promote K-pop, K-food and K-dramas worldwide, and those demonstrating leadership in governments and private sectors across nations, are the representative faces and brand of the Republic of Korea."

He also promised, "We will pool our wisdom based on social consensus to resolve the issue of lowering the age limit for dual citizenship, a long-cherished aspiration of the overseas Korean community."


Overseas compatriots have long requested relaxing the current age limit of 65 for dual citizenship, seeking to obtain it during economically active years.



President Lee Jae Myung delivers a commemorative address at the 19th World Korean Day ceremony held at the Grand Walkerhill Seoul Hotel in Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, on Oct. 2. (Photo provided by Presidential Press Office)

Lee also expressed his intention to improve systems to make voting easier for overseas citizens.

Additionally, Lee said: "During my recent overseas trip, I heard from our compatriots that the government provides no assistance in establishing organizations like Korean associations. You are citizens too, so it is only natural that we support you. We will strengthen consular functions to ensure our sincere dedication to overseas Koreans is fully realized, going beyond simple administrative services.

"Our compatriots, who have transformed countless adversities into opportunities, are the beacons illuminating our nation's future. The Republic of Korea will confidently join hands with you and lead the way toward a freer and more peaceful world." 

‘LA wildfires proved Korean community’s strength, moving beyond memories of the riots’

‘Clean and Safe Koreatown’ project launched ahead of 2026 World Cup and 2028 LA Olympics

“Just five days into my term, I faced a historic wildfire. But the crisis became an opportunity. The Korean community’s status shifted from being victims during the LA riots to becoming helpers this time.”

At just 50 years old, Robert Ahn is the president leading the Korean Association of Los Angeles (LA), home to the largest Korean diaspora worldwide. He shared these insights in an interview with Yonhap News at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel in Seoul, where the Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup) is hosting the 2025 World Korean Association Conference.

Ahn, who faced an unexpected major disaster shortly after taking office, candidly discussed the wildfire damage sites, the Korean community’s response, and his vision and concerns as a second-generation Korean leader.

“While this wildfire caused record damage, it was concentrated mainly in predominantly white residential areas, so fortunately, damage to Koreans was limited,” he said. “This was different from the situation during the 1992 LA riots, when Koreatown was left defenseless and suffered significant damage.”

‘Large-scale relief and material support; now it’s our turn to help’

As a lawyer, he spoke about his experience providing legal aid during the wildfires.

“When I heard about the wildfires, memories of the LA riots

overlapped, and the shock to the Korean community was immense,” he said.

While about 40 households have registered damage with the Korean Association, the actual scale of damage is estimated to be larger.

Ahn explained: “For completely destroyed homes, the recovery process is extremely complex, involving soil remediation, safety inspections and permitting procedures. The victims face immense hardship, compounded by insurance issues, declining property values and even attempts by investors to purchase their properties.”

Given the relatively minor impact on Koreans, the LA Korean Association actively stepped up to support the broader American community.

“Thanks to the full cooperation of our Korean community, we secured 200,000 masks in just three days and swiftly distributed them to the wildfire-affected areas,” he said. “Within two months, we raised \$230,000 in donations. The Korean community’s united effort to help the local community actually became an opportunity to gain recognition from mainstream society.”

Through direct connections with state government and city of LA, Korean Association made its presence felt

“During past riots, Koreatown was abandoned amid political powerlessness, but now political accessibility has changed to the



Robert Ahn (5th from R, back row), presenting relief funds to Korean Americans affected by wildfires, takes a commemorative photo.



Robert Ahn (2nd from R) holds a press conference regarding wildfire relief efforts with sponsor representatives present, reporting on fundraising progress, damage cases and support policies at the LA Korean Association on April 3.



Robert Ahn, president of the Los Angeles (LA) Korean Association

point where we can call the mayor directly. The Korean community has gained the strength to cooperate with mainstream society on equal footing,” Ahn said.

Public safety is currently the most pressing issue in LA’s Koreatown.

“Public safety is severely compromised due to problems like homelessness, mental health issues and the policy of not prosecuting criminals. The Korean Association is taking the lead in conducting safety campaigns,” Ahn said.

“Korean seniors are most at risk. They rely heavily on buses and walking, exposing them significantly to crime. We cannot just wait for government budgets, so we are preparing self-help measures led by the Korean Association,” he said.

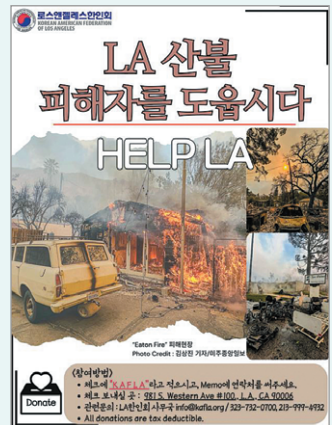
“With the World Cup next year and the 2028 LA Olympics approaching, if things remain as they are now, we could become a laughingstock to the world. Our urgent priority is to create an environment where foreign tourists visiting Koreatown due to the Korean Wave craze can stay safely,” he said.

Upon taking office as president, Ahn adopted the slogan “Connection.”

“‘Connection’ signifies not merely generational succession, but the first and second generations walking together to inherit the legacy. This concept is a philosophy unique to the Korean community, difficult to translate into English,” he said.

“One reason I ran for Korean Association president was a sense of crisis that the legacy built by the first generation could be lost without preparation. Without active participation from the second and third generations, there is no future for the Korean community.”

An LA wildfire relief campaign poster for Korean victims



‘Perceptions of Koreans have changed dramatically thanks to K-pop and Samsung’

“Perceptions of Koreans have changed dramatically thanks to the success of K-pop, Samsung and BTS,” he said. “In the past, Koreans were confined to roles like deliverymen in mainstream films, but now it’s completely different. Korea’s success is the strength of our diaspora community. We must grow like the Jewish community.

“We should model ourselves after communities like the Jewish diaspora -- small in number but possessing formidable political power. The Korean government must also step up to support the diaspora, systematically connecting the global network of Koreans,” he proposed.

“The success of politicians like Sen. Andy Kim is possible not only through individual ability but also with the backing of the Korean community. To become a more powerful Korea in the next 10 or 20 years, we must prepare starting now.”

Born in the United States, Ahn conducted the interview fluently in Korean.

“My mother couldn’t speak English, and I naturally learned Korean while living with my grandparents. The Korean language is a gift from my parents. Korean is the power that preserves my identity,” he said.

“I was in third grade during the 1984 LA Olympics. Even though I was born in the U.S., I cheered for Korea. I don’t know why, but my identity has always been Korean,” Ahn remarked, revealing the deep-rooted consciousness of a second-generation leader.

“While Koreans have achieved success, they remain passive about service and donations. Yet, these are essential for the community’s sustainability,” he said.

“During my two-year term, I won’t just manage the Korean Association; I’ll build a system that looks ahead five, ten years. I will practice connection so future generations can inherit responsibility and pride.” 장

‘A final deep bow to Korean War veterans. Our respect will continue’

‘Vision for K-bridge: honoring veterans, settlement support, cultural diplomacy’;
model of public diplomacy integrated with local community

“Though it was a deep bow at the last official service event, our gratitude and respect will not cease. Only the form will change.”

Ko Jung-mi (64), president of the Waikato Korean Association, leading a community of about 2,000 Koreans in Hamilton, North Island, New Zealand, said this in an interview with Yonhap News while reflecting on the June 29 event commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Korean War.

The Waikato region’s veterans’ service event, Peace Sunday, began in 1997. Once attended by over 30 veterans, only five remain today. Considering their advanced age, this year marked the final official event.

Visiting her homeland to attend the 2025 World Korean Association Conference hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency, she pledged, “The Korean people’s spirit of gratitude will continue to spread wider and deeper.”

The final event was attended by approximately 150 people, including 12 veterans and bereaved family members, as well as Koreans and locals.

“When veteran Brian recited ‘Memories of a 15-Year-Old Boy Soldier,’ everyone fell silent in solemn respect,” Ko said. “The emotion of that day was not just a simple event but a scene proving the Korean spirit of gratitude.”

All-in-one service that helped overcome the COVID crisis

Since its establishment in 1995, the Waikato Korean Association has served as a steadfast pillar supporting Korean settlement and daily life.

“The association is not merely a protective barrier for Koreans alone but a bridge walking side by side with the local community,” Ko said. “Honoring veterans, providing settlement support, public services and cultural exchange form the three pillars of our activities.”

The association’s resilience shone brightly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2020, it collaborated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OKA to secure a special Korean Air flight for Koreans and international students stranded from returning home.

“The greatest sense of fulfillment came when I heard the association had proven its raison d’être during the crisis,” she said.



Ko Jung-mi, president of the Korean Association of Waikato, New Zealand

Support for Korean settlement was systematized through the All-in-One Information Day.

“Koreans greatly appreciate being able to handle consular affairs, legal, accounting, medical and psychological counseling all in one day without having to go to Auckland,” Ko said. “Multicultural settlement ultimately means lowering barriers.”

Bridging generations with K Silver Meeting and community care

Thoughtful consideration for the aging Korean community also



Ko Jung-mi moves hearts by bowing deeply to veterans and expressing gratitude during the final veterans' appreciation event on June 29.



After the Peace Sunday event honoring veterans at the 75th anniversary commemoration of the Korean War held in Hamilton, New Zealand, on June 29, President Ko Jung-mi (6th from L in back row) poses for a commemorative photo with veterans.

stands out. The monthly K-Silver Meeting is a flagship program for seniors.

"On the last Thursday of every month, we host a gathering where seniors dine together and share health tips. Hearing them say they don't feel lonely in their immigrant life gives me great satisfaction," Ko said.

Additionally, the association provides free meals at least once a week for vulnerable compatriots, hosts the Haecho-mom gathering for young parents, offers after-school activities for youth, and operates a cultural center teaching free Korean language and computer classes, English courses and paper folding.

"An everyday platform that bridges generations and social classes is the true strength of the Korean community," she said.

The annual K-Festival is a symbolic event for exchanges with the local community. It features traditional arts stages like bulgogi and bibimbap experiences, kimchi-making, K-pop contests, "gayageum" and fan dance performances, paper folding and "hanbok" fashion shows, attracting over 500 local participants.

"I experienced Korean food with my whole body while tasting kimchi made by locals," Ko said. "Cultural diplomacy doesn't have to be grand; it begins with sharing a meal and laughter together. Koreans living overseas must engage with locals. Only by paying taxes in their host countries and contributing to those nations' prosperity can they truly shine on the global stage."

The Korean Association has built community trust by launching various free programs with support from Hamilton City Council, the OKA and New Zealand government funds.

"The core is trust and transparency. Even starting small, if you build records and trust, government support naturally follows." Ko said.

Ko's service record shines particularly brightly in the educational field. For 24 years since 2000, she served as a teacher, vice principal and principal at the Waikato Korean School, dedicating herself to educating the next generation in Korean language,

history, culture and identity. She also co-founded and chaired both the New Zealand Hangeul School Council and the Oceania Hangeul School Council, and served as a representative for the World Hangeul School Council. She currently serves as the Overseas Teachers' Association President for the Korean Language Society.

"Hangeul, history and cultural education are fundamental. But now we must add projects that engage with the local community. Teachers are the infrastructure of hope."

Additionally, as vice president of the Waikato Multicultural Association, she consistently participates in multicultural festivals wearing hanbok, promoting Korean culture.

"I feel most proud when locals understand Korea through hanbok."

Recipient of New Zealand's Queen's Service Medal

For her contributions, Ko has received the New Zealand Queen's Service Medal (2012), the Hamilton Citizen Service Award (2014), the Republic of Korea Presidential Commendation (2016), the Hangeul Society's Korean Language Movement Merit Award (2018) and the World Korean Day National Medal (2024).

However, she deflected the credit, stating, "The medals and awards are not mine alone but shared by all Koreans, locals and volunteers."

Regarding future plans, she said, "We will transition support for veterans into sustainable honor through daily life and documentation projects, and make settlement support a year-round permanent service."

She also announced plans to create a model where the elderly, youth and multicultural communities come together on one stage through the upcoming K-Festival on Nov. 8.

"Honoring veterans opens the path to memory, settlement support opens the path to today, and cultural exchange opens the path to tomorrow. The Waikato Korean Association will continue to serve as a K-bridge, connecting Korea and New Zealand." 🇰🇷

‘Do you know Tasmania? Seniors, give it a try!’

Succeeded in starting business after immigrating later in life at age 49; ‘going overseas isn’t just for young people’

“Going global isn’t just for young people. The experience and networks of middle-aged and elderly individuals can be invaluable resources in local communities.”

Park Chan-won (70), president of the Korean Association of Tasmania and chairman of the Korean Volunteer Association, visited his homeland to attend the 2025 World Korean Association Conference, hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency. In an interview with Yonhap News, he shared his experience of taking on the challenge of overseas immigration later in life, encouraging middle-aged and elderly individuals to pursue similar ventures abroad.

Tasmania is known as the Pure Island and boasts a pristine environment. Compared with other major cities, the cost of living is relatively low, and with a low crime rate, it is considered a safe and attractive immigration destination, especially for middle-aged and elderly people. Park emphasized it is ideal for pursuing a “slow life” away from competitive cultures, helping reduce stress and increase life satisfaction after retirement.

“The experience and expertise we have gained in Korea can be advantageous for Korean companies seeking to enter the local market or for exchange projects between Australia and Korea,” he said.

This represents an opportunity to build a second career by serving as a bridge across diverse fields, such as trade, construction and tourism.

“There are many success stories leveraging the networks of local Korean seniors,” he said, adding that middle-aged individuals designing their second act or retirees can enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle here.

‘The moment you feel it’s too late is actually the best time to start’

Despite having a stable foundation in Korea’s construction industry, Park never gave up on his lifelong dream of expanding overseas. At age 49 in 2004, he left for Australia.

His belief that “the moment you feel it’s too late is actually the best time to start” led him to begin “from the ground up.” After learning English and Australian culture at a language school, he worked as a laborer on construction sites, gaining foundational



Park Chan-won (4th from R) commemorates the installation of the previously missing Korean flag patch on the Wall of Friendship in downtown Hobart in 2015.

experience in carpentry, plastering, tiling and interior work.

After eight years of preparation, the construction company “Harmony” he founded in 2012 grew into a mid-sized enterprise encompassing building material import/export, design, construction and real estate development. It is also leading the way in introducing Korean building materials and the “ondol” heating system to Australia.

Park emphasized to Korean entrepreneurs dreaming of overseas expansion, “You cannot succeed without a deep understanding of the local market.

“There was a case where someone jumped into Tasmanian real estate development driven solely by enthusiasm, creating numerous victims and tarnishing the nation’s image. You must meticulously verify laws and regulations, understand local practices and prepare thoroughly with local advice.”

In the early days of the business, a lack of trust in Korean entrepreneurs was overcome by building a track record through the self-development and sale of townhouses. When problems arose, he responded by “meeting decision-makers directly and confronting the issue head-on” to pave the way forward.

Expanding bonds through Hangeul schools and cultural events

A businessman and leader in the Korean community, he cites “sharing and service” as his life philosophy. Having experienced hardship in his youth, he grew to understand the struggles of the



Park Chan-won, president of the Korean Association of Tasmania, Australia, stated that “sharing and service” is his life philosophy.

socially vulnerable, which naturally led to his belief in a “community that grows together.”

Just as he did in Korea, when founding the Korean Volunteer Association in Tasmania, he started with only like-minded Koreans. However, by collaborating with the local community to host Hangeul schools and cultural events, he strengthened bonds. Notably, he expanded his influence by partnering with the local Chinese community through its Chinese members.

“Though we are a small Korean community, we broadened our bonds by collaborating with the local community to host Korean language schools and cultural events. The belief that small efforts can bring about great change has borne fruit.”

He also takes the lead in promoting Korean culture every Lunar New Year. This past February, he hosted a Lunar New Year festival at Salamanca Square in Hobart, showcasing Korean culture through taekwondo demonstrations and K-food like “tteokbokki” and bulgogi.

Last Chuseok, he held an event celebrating the holiday with adopted compatriots and Korean families. They shared goods through a swap meet and fostered friendship, achieving positive results for the fifth consecutive year.

Park also fulfilled a long-cherished wish of the Korean community. At the Korean Garden, a memorial space for Korean War veterans, a Korean-language marker was erected in 2014 with support from Gapyeong County, Gyeonggi Province.

Previously, a signboard incorrectly labeled as Sea of Japan was corrected to East Sea. Additionally, the missing Taegeukgi patch

was affixed to the Wall of Friendship in the Hobart city center in 2015.

“We persistently persuaded the Australian government and local authorities, emphasizing historical facts and Korea-Australia friendship,” he said. “Regular cleanup activities and the support of veterans were our strength.”

He also said he will never forget teaching Korean to adopted compatriots so they could communicate via KakaoTalk, nor the moment they shared tears together at a veterans’ appreciation event.

Korean community’s long-awaited Korean Garden realized; pursuing its expansion into multiuse cultural space

The commitment is to continue expanding Korean traditional culture across Australia through K-pop and film exchanges, as well as hanbok experience events. Additionally, his goal is also to revitalize the Australian Korean Immigration History Compilation Committee, which aims to preserve the Korean people’s legacy for future generations while uncovering and preserving materials related to Korean War veterans. Furthermore, he plans to tightly knit a network for families of adopted compatriots to instill a sense of identity.

Park is currently advancing plans to expand the Korean Garden into a cultural complex. He is pursuing land acquisition and fundraising, aiming to establish not just a cultural space but a Korea-Australia Cultural Hub that combines a Korean Association office, Korean language school, exhibition hall and performance venue -- a place where locals and Koreans can interact.

For instance, the plan includes not only traditional Korean cultural performances and craft exhibitions but also exhibitions and performances for local Australian residents.

Park concluded by delivering a message to the next generation.

“Although I immigrated later in life and had to start from scratch, we achieved our goals by pooling our strength with fellow Koreans. The next generation has more favorable conditions. I hope you will open a brighter future through the power of togetherness.” 🙏



The next generation of Koreans showcases a taekwondo demonstration during the Lunar New Year festival in February.

‘Diaspora is Korea’s driving force and strategic asset’

Lessons for Korea from Israel’s youth policy; ‘organic inter-ministry collaboration is essential’

“Israel views its diaspora not merely as immigrants but as a core strategic asset for national development. Korea also needs to strategically redesign its policies for overseas Korean youth.”

Lee Kang-geun (61), president of the Korean Association in Israel (director of the Jerusalem Institute for Jewish Studies), stated this during an interview with Yonhap News on Oct. 1 at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel in Seoul, where the 2025 World Korean Association Conference hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup) was being held. He introduced Israel’s case of elevating youth diaspora policy to a national-level strategy.

“Israel has established a comprehensive structure where four agencies -- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Immigration, the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization (WZO) -- closely collaborate. This structure connects identity education, short- and long-term homeland visit programs, return (‘aliyah’) and settlement support in a step-by-step manner,” Lee said.

Lee stated that the implications of Israel’s policy for Korea are clear. He first emphasized, “Identity must be elevated beyond mere cultural education to a national development strategy.”

‘Youth visits to their homeland should be developed into path to return’

Just as Israel designed a flow connecting Zionist education, visits and return, Korea must also develop its overseas youth homeland visit programs into a structure that progresses from maintaining identity to participation and contribution, and ultimately to return.

“Organic collaboration between ministries is essential,” he further pointed out, explaining that while education, diplomacy and settlement support are currently fragmented in Korea, they must be integrated into a single system for overseas Korean policies to gain traction.

He also stressed the importance of sustaining a global network after homeland visits.

“Israel doesn’t stop at just a homeland visit program; it maintains a youth community afterward. Korea also needs institutional support to connect overseas youth with domestic youth, leading to internships or startup opportunities,” Lee said.



Lee Kang-geun, president of the Korean Association in Israel

He also highlighted the necessity of reverse leadership dispatch.

“Like Israel’s ‘shlichim,’ Korea should dispatch young leaders to overseas Korean language schools and Korean community organizations to directly lead identity education. This experience serves as leadership training for the youth and provides significant support to local communities.”

Cooperating with Korean Association for evacuation during Israel-Iran War

Lee also shared his experience personally directing the evacuation of Korean residents during the Israel-Iran War last June, emphasizing: “In the face of crisis, the Korean people united as one to protect each other. The war began at a moment no one anticipated. One thing was clear then: We had to protect each other.”

Lee recalled the urgent evacuation process led by the Korean Association at the time.

Following Israel’s airstrikes on Iran on June 13, Iran and pro-

Korean nationals are evacuated to Egypt during the Israel-Iran conflict last June.



Iranian armed groups launched missile counterattacks, plunging all of Israel into a wartime situation. As air raid sirens sounded in major cities like Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and missile alerts intensified, the Korean community of about 800 people also had to urgently prepare evacuation measures.

'Emergency evacuation operation' to Jordan and Egypt

"We judged that the situation was deteriorating rapidly, making an airport escape impossible," Lee said. "The Korean Association had no choice but to directly take charge of directing the evacuation of our compatriots." The association promptly devised an emergency evacuation plan via land routes and, in cooperation with the Korean Embassy in Israel, first established a route through neighboring Jordan.

The first evacuation began June 15, with six people, including the elderly, the infirm and children, bypassing areas near the Syrian border and moving to Amman, the capital of Jordan. Subsequently, on June 16, a second group of 23 people arrived in Jordan. As the situation worsened, the Korean Association expanded the route to include Cairo, Egypt, and on June 23, 43 expatriates escaped via the Taba border crossing.

"The overland journey was a grueling route lasting over 16 hours. We had to halt due to air raid alerts, but we couldn't give up."

For the evacuation convoy, the association prepared boxed meals, bottled water and emergency medicine at dawn.

"At 4 a.m., we prepared boxed meals with fellow expatriates and embarked on a long journey. When we crossed the border and arrived in Cairo, the Egyptian Korean Association provided warm meals and homestays, and the embassy also offered active assistance. I was deeply moved by the solidarity of the Korean people across borders."

The Korean Associations in Jordan and Egypt urgently activated a homestay-style evacuation shelter system, while Korean churches, including Myeongseong Church, supported evacuation costs. The Korean Embassy in Israel also coordinated with the embassies in Jordan and Egypt to secure border crossing permits and vehicle support.

Korean Associations unite to launch Levant Korean Federation

"When we crossed the border, local Koreans reached out to us, saying, 'You're safe now.' This would have been impossible without Korean solidarity," Lee said.

He emphasized that this evacuation underscored the urgent need for cooperation among regional Korean associations, announcing the launch of a new international cooperative body.

"The cooperation shown by Korean associations across nations during the war was nothing short of miraculous. We couldn't let this be a one-time event."

From Sept. 2 to 4, Korean associations from five countries -- Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt -- gathered in Dahab, Egypt, to establish the Levant Korean Federation. Lee, president of the Korean Association in Israel, was appointed as its inaugural president.

This federation is a permanent rescue network that shares information on Korean nationals in Middle Eastern conflict zones, establishes joint safety measures, and activates evacuation, relief and communication systems during crises.

"In regions where war and terrorism risks are a daily reality, information exchange and joint response among Korean associations are not optional but essential," Lee said. [장]



Presidents of Korean associations affiliated with the Levant Korean Federation pose for a photo. From Sept. 2-4, Korean associations from five countries -- Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt -- gathered in Dahab, Egypt, to establish the Levant Korean Federation. Lee Kang-geun was appointed as its inaugural president.

‘Global Hansang business network expands its economic sphere with K-food’

Second World Korean Business Forum in Mokpo; discussions on building economic sphere for Korean merchants and overseas expansion for SMEs
OKA and South Jeolla Province co-host 2025 2nd Export Consultation Fair; enthusiasm for consultations at ‘fever pitch’

Strategies to expand the “hansang” (Korean merchants) economic sphere using K-food were discussed at the World Korean Business Forum in Mokpo, South Jeolla Province, on Oct. 21.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup) and South Jeolla Province (Gov. Kim Young-rok) hosted the 2nd World Korean Business Forum at Hotel Hyundai by Lahan Mokpo that day.

The forum, which included an opening ceremony, keynote presentations and panel discussions, was attended by approximately 110 participants, including OKA Vice Commissioner Byeon Cheol-hwan, South Jeolla Province Deputy Gov. Kang Wi-won, members of the Overseas Koreans Business Advisory Group (OK-BIZ), and representatives from small and medium-sized enterprises.

“The mission of the OKA is to connect the capabilities of the overseas Korean community to the overall capabilities of the Korean people,” Byeon said in his opening remarks. “In the economic sphere, we will support domestic companies in pioneering overseas markets by leveraging the networks centered around overseas Korean businesspeople.”

Kang emphasized in his welcoming remarks: “In a situation where traditional trade rules like FTAs and the WTO are being shaken and an uncertain new order is causing confusion, the role of partners who know the local market well becomes increasingly important as tariff barriers rise and regulations grow more complex. Support from overseas buyers and overseas Koreans with global influence is desperately needed for companies dreaming of global expansion.”

Professor Lee Jin-young of Inha University presented on the theme “From the Korean economy to the global economy: Building a Korean global network.”

“The global Korean economic sphere is a new ecosystem bound by economy, technology and creativity,” Lee said. “Strategic partnerships with overseas Korean businesses are needed, centered on K-food, a strength of South Jeolla Province.”

Danny Lee, head of the Americas at Juna (OK-BIZ committee



The 2025 2nd SME Export Consultation Fair

member), who presented on “Success strategies for Korean companies in the U.S. market,” advised: “Entering the U.S. market is not an area where results can be achieved in the short term; systematic preparation and a long-term perspective are required. The key lies in shifting from a product-centric to a program-centric mindset, creating transactional value, and ensuring continuous management and communication. Above all, the starting point must be a humble attitude that recognizes what one does not know and seeks to compensate for it.”

Yang Kyung-ho, head of the Global Business Division at the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA, said, “Mutually beneficial partnerships are key,” during his presentation titled “Korean SMEs’ entry into the U.S. market through cooperation with U.S. local governments.”

“We must establish and jointly pursue a model where key stakeholders -- the Korean national government, local governments, institutions, SMEs, Korean American businesspeople in the U.S. and U.S. local governments -- all benefit together,” he said.

Kim Young-mi, CEO of Youngmi Beauty, shared in her presentation titled “Collaboration with overseas Korean business leaders: Success stories in overseas markets,” “The export preparation process takes a long time, three to five years, but



The 2025 2nd World Korean Business Forum

through consistent preparation, opportunities can be seized.”

Cho Hanna, deputy director of KOTRA's Gwangju-Jeonnam Support Headquarters, introduced support programs and utilization strategies for overseas Korean businesspeople and domestic SMEs to overcome uncertainty through her presentation titled “Growth exit strategy for the culture-leading K-food industry.”

The subsequent panel discussion focused on practical case studies and policy directions for Korean SMEs' overseas expansion strategies and localization approaches. Businesspeople with U.S. market experience, government officials and export support agency representatives participated, sharing diverse know-how and field insights.

70 companies and 30 overseas Korean buyers from 16 countries participated

The 2025 2nd Export Consultation Fair was held at the same venue on Oct. 22 to support the overseas expansion of domestic SMEs through collaboration with overseas Korean businesspeople.

Notably, 30 businesspeople from the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK-BIZ) were invited to conduct one-on-one customized consultations with 70 promising SMEs from the Jeonnam region. Consultation items ranged from beauty appliances to cosmetics, seafood and other consumer goods.

This event was planned with the goal of going beyond simple business matching to generate tangible contract results and establish mid- to long-term partnerships. Various ancillary services were provided free of charge on-site to assist participating companies with their consultations. Across 25 tables, over 100 domestic SME representatives and overseas buyers engaged in one-on-one export consultations in a lively atmosphere.

“We export seaweed, kelp and ‘kombu’ to seven countries, including the U.S., China and Canada,” said Jang Se-jong, director of Bada Myeongga Ltd. (Sejong Mulsan), headquartered in Wando, South Jeolla Province. “We participated in the consultation meeting to diversify our exports. We plan to produce eco-friendly organic dried kelp and other products to pioneer new sales channels.”

Park Yang-hwan, executive director of the abalone distributor Bada Sopoong, who attended the consultation meeting, said: “We export to China, Japan and Taiwan at an average monthly scale of 700 to 800 million won. We came for consultations around entering the Vietnamese market. Even when overseas orders come in, we face a dire situation where we can't export due to container shortages. We hope South Jeolla Province will support us so we can export abalone on time.”

South Jeolla Province companies join hands with overseas Korean business leaders

Lee Yoo-kyung, senior vice president of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations' (World-OKTA) New Delhi Chapter in India and an OK-BIZ committee member participating in export consultations, said, “It's regrettable that the product categories brought by domestic SMEs for consultation are mostly seafood, lacking diversification.”

This export consultation is part of the “Korean Business Network” initiative being promoted by the OKA. This initiative was officially announced at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta, the U.S., last April. It aims to strengthen ties between domestic companies and overseas Korean businesses to jointly respond to global economic uncertainties.

Considering the recent global popularity of K-food, the export consultation meeting primarily selected OK-BIZ members and SMEs related to K-food, providing them with opportunities to enter the global market.

Notably, over 30 of the 180 OK-BIZ advisory committee members appointed last August attended this day's consultation session. They actively supported the overseas expansion of outstanding local companies participating in the export consultation fair through one-on-one business meetings.

Additionally, on Oct. 23, OK-BIZ visited the 2025 South Jeolla Province International Gastronomy Industry Expo held at the Mokpo Culture & Arts Center, conducting business consultations and tours of the expo grounds with 42 participating companies. 🇵🇸

‘The moment you recognize what you don’t know, that’s when business begins’

‘For Korean companies to succeed in U.S., they must approach it from the lens of programs, not just products’

“The reason Korean companies fail in the U.S. market is because they rely solely on what they know. Recognizing what you don’t know and the process of learning it is itself the beginning of growth.”

Danny Lee, a member of the Overseas Koreans Business Advisory Group (OK Biz), made these remarks to Yonhap News during the 2025 2nd World Korean Business Forum and Export Consultation Fair in Mokpo, South Jeolla Province, on Oct. 22, co-hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency and South Jeolla Province.

Lee is a seasoned professional with over 35 years of hands-on experience in the United States, starting from retail, moving to wholesale and expanding into large distribution markets. He currently serves as the head of the North American subsidiary of Juna and directs sales for G-Dragon Highball.

“I have never been connected to KOTRA,” he said. “I learned through direct hands-on experience in the field, and that’s why I understand better than anyone that what Korean companies lack most when entering the U.S. market is that on-the-ground instinct.”

He points out that Korean companies are trapped within their own “known territory.”

“Admitting what you don’t know and studying it, that is true competitiveness,” he emphasized.

He added that the success of Korean companies seeking to enter the U.S. market begins not with finding “products they want to sell” but with finding “products buyers want to buy.”

He delivered a painful diagnosis of Korean companies’ market approach.

“Many companies take a product-centric approach. But the U.S. market is program-centric. If you stake everything on a single product, you will inevitably hit a wall.”

‘Find products buyers actually want to purchase’

He cited the real-world example of “frozen gimhap,” which was popular several years ago.

“When gimhap gained popularity in the U.S., countless companies jumped in, but most failed. The reason is simple: They approached gimhap solely as a product. U.S. buyers want a



Danny Lee, a member of the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK Biz)

complete meal rather than a single item. You need to propose a set program featuring two to three types of kimchap paired with other side dishes to catch their attention.”

He also emphasized, “Buyers think, ‘I can buy what I want anywhere.’ To sell a product, you must present the value of the transaction, not just the value of the product.”

“The moment you deliver the product is not the end but the beginning. You must present an exit strategy even after the transaction. If inventory stagnates, propose discount sales, and during that process, introduce new products alongside them. That’s how you build trust with buyers.”

He also shared his experience using major U.S. retailer Walmart’s Retail Link system.

“You can check real-time inventory by store. If sales trends are poor, you must contact the buyer first and propose solutions. This proactive communication is the key to maintaining the business relationship.”

However, he noted that many Korean companies neglect post-delivery management and often face sudden order cancellations.

“Once a product enters the market, that’s when real management begins. You must identify why it’s not selling. Ignoring this can cause even hundreds of millions of won in investments to collapse in an instant.”

‘Storytelling’ and ‘localization’ must be thoroughly prepared

Lee also offered a sobering perspective on market entry via Korean supermarkets.

“Korean supermarkets offer good accessibility, but their scale is limited. Even with just 25 to 30 stores, they demand exclusive rights. Then distributors frequently switch to other products. Ultimately, we become mere supporting players for their own label goods.”

He advised that to overcome these structural issues, Korean companies must thoroughly prepare “storytelling” and “localization.”

“American buyers ask, ‘Why do we need this product?’ Simply saying it’s tasty or cheap doesn’t work. Packaging, certifications, shelf life and consumer reviews must be localized.”

He also warned that the U.S. market remains 83 percent offline-centric, cautioning against focusing solely on Amazon.

“America’s distribution structure is nearly identical to 25 years ago. After 35 years of research, I’ve learned that the U.S. is a traditional, stable market. Its fundamental structure won’t change in five years. Only companies that consistently build trust within it will secure a foothold.”

Building trust through small transactions comes first

“Entering the U.S. market is by no means impossible,” he asserted. “Opportunities definitely exist. But don’t expect quick success. Learning the local language and culture, and building trust through small transactions comes first. Companies that endure that process ultimately conquer the U.S. market.”

Lee concluded the interview by criticizing the excessive



Lee delivers a keynote presentation at the 2nd World Korean Business Forum.



Lee consults with small and medium-sized business owners on exports.

commercialization trend leveraging K-pop among domestic entertainment companies.

“Entertainment companies view the average lifespan of idols as short and drive excessive unit sales and merchandise purchases through commercialization. This highlights commercial aspects over cultural value, leading to negative perceptions in places like the U.S.” 장



Members of the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK Biz) and key players at the 2025 2nd World Korean Business Forum and Export Consultation Fair pose for a photo.

Chairman Seo Gab-ho: ‘Pioneer of investment in the homeland’ and ‘Spinning Mill King of Japan’

Led large-scale investment in the motherland during the 1960s, contributing to Korea’s economic development

Led movement to donate properties to diplomatic missions in Japan, including providing land for Korean Embassy in Japan

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup) has selected Chairman Seo Gab-ho (1914-1976) as the Overseas Korean of the Month for October 2025. He donated the building and grounds of the Korean Embassy in Japan and contributed to Korea’s economic development through large-scale investment in his homeland during difficult times.

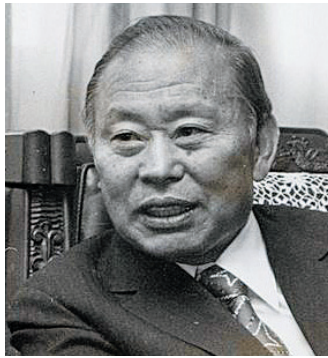
Seo Gab-ho was born in 1914 in Samnam-myeon, Ulju-gun, South Gyeongsang Province, the son of a poor farmer. At age 9, he crossed over to Osaka, Japan, alone, without a single relative. Driven solely by the determination to survive, he collected scrap materials, sold candy and gum, and took on all manner of menial jobs, saving every penny to build his seed money.

Noticing his diligence, a Japanese acquaintance introduced him to a job at the Shinto towel factory in Osaka’s Senshu region. Enduring discrimination and contempt, he mastered weaving techniques and gained insight into the spinning industry.

Using his savings and two machines received from Shinto, he established a cottage-style cotton spinning mill in Izumisano. Cotton was designated a military supply, so everything he produced sold out immediately, generating revenue that later became the foundation for his spinning business.

In March 1948, after Korea’s liberation from Japan, he used his accumulated seed money to purchase discarded spinning machines and established Sakamoto Spinning, going from strength to strength. Two years later, in the spring of 1950, he acquired Kawasaki Heavy Industries and established a second factory, Osaka Spinning. The outbreak of the Korean War caused a surge in demand for military uniforms, keeping the factories running around the clock.

Riding this momentum, in 1955, Seo acquired Hitachi Spinning, which was facing bankruptcy, and ascended to the position of group chairman. By 1961, he achieved annual sales of 10 billion yen



Chairman Seo Gab-ho, selected as the Overseas Korean of the Month for October, known as the “Spinning Mill King of Japan”

(US\$65 million), earning the title “Spinning Mill King of Japan” and becoming Osaka’s top income taxpayer. The Sakamoto Spinning Group grew into one of Japan’s top 10 spinning companies, driving the nation’s economic revival. Seo expanded his business into hotels and real estate, even entering the top five ranking of Japan’s highest-income earners.

‘One must never feel ashamed of one’s homeland’; an extraordinary love for his country

Seo, who rose to become chairman of a major Japanese corporation, never spared support for his homeland and the Korean community in Japan, driven by an extraordinary love for his country that “one must never feel ashamed of one’s homeland.”

In October 1951, he purchased a 2,400-pyeong (7933 m²) plot of land and a two-story building in Tokyo’s Azabu district (currently valued at 1 trillion won), formerly used as the Danish Embassy residence, and provided it free of charge to the then Korean Embassy in Japan for a 10-year period. Later, on Aug. 15, 1962, during a visit to Korea as part of the Korean Residents in Japan Delegation for the Liberation Day ceremony, he donated the Azabu No. 1 land and building to the government, along with a deed of donation.

Furthermore, in 1970, he purchased a building and land in Shirokane, Tokyo, and donated them to the state in 1975. These properties, which the government found difficult to acquire at a time when the per capita GDP was less than \$130, became the foundation for the current Korean Embassy in Japan and the ambassador’s residence.

Seo also spearheaded the movement to donate land for diplomatic missions in Japan. In 1963, when the Korean Consulate in Osaka was relocating, he and four other Korean residents in Japan raised 27 million yen to donate as a security deposit.

Dedication to advancing rights of Koreans in Japan and also national consciousness education

Chairman Seo also made profound contributions to advancing the rights of the Korean community and education for the national consciousness. Beginning in 1957, he served as the second chairman of the board of directors for the Geumgang Academy, an Osaka-based Korean school, personally funding its annual operating expenses from his private assets until his passing. He spearheaded the establishment of the Takarazuka Korean Academy and subsidized its operational costs. Furthermore, he donated 5 million yen annually to the Osaka Korean Residents Union in Japan and made a substantial donation for the construction of the Korean Pavilion during the 1970 Osaka Expo.

Seo's investments in his homeland gained momentum in 1961 during the implementation of former President Park Chung-hee's economic development plan. This marked the first large-scale investment in the homeland by a Korean Japanese, significantly contributing to Korea's textile industry and economic development at the time, making him a pioneer of overseas Koreans' investment in the homeland.

In February 1963, he acquired Taechang Textile, Korea's largest cotton mill located in Yeongdeungpo, for \$1 million and established Panbon Textile Co., Ltd. in the Mulla-dong area of Seoul. Four years later, the company changed its name to Banglim Spinning. In 1973, he invested approximately \$70 million in Gumi to establish Yunseong Spinning, installing state-of-the-art cotton spinning machinery and the latest spinning machines. The combined workforce of Banglim Spinning and Yunseong Spinning reached 4,000 employees. He established Banglim Girls' High School within the Banglim Spinning factory premises for young female workers, providing educational materials and tuition support to offer them opportunities to continue their studies.

Korean Embassy in Japan designates Nov. 1 each year as Seo Gab-ho Day

The thriving business, however, began to rapidly decline after a massive fire broke out at the Yunseong Spinning Factory in January 1974, causing damage worth 14.3 billion won. The factory, spanning over 66 acres, was destroyed by the fire, causing immense damage.



A commemorative photo taken after Chairman Seo Gab-ho (L, front row) visited the Blue House on Aug. 15, 1962, to present the deed for the land and building of the Korean Embassy in Japan to then Chairman of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction Park Chung-hee (2nd from L, front row).



The children of the late Chairman Seo Gab-ho, who donated the land for the embassy, attend the opening ceremony of the new Korean Embassy building in Tokyo on July 18, 2013. The children in attendance were Seo Sang-wook (second son, 2nd from R), Seo Sang-un (third son) and Seo Gyeong-nam (third daughter), along with his granddaughter Seo Haeng-ja (far R). The name Dongmyeongshil was chosen to honor the deceased's pen name.

In addition, the economic downturn from the first oil crisis and soaring crude oil prices caused the profitability of the textile business to deteriorate. Ultimately, in 1974, Japan's Sakamoto Spinning defaulted on 300 million yen in promissory notes, leading to a 64 billion-yen bankruptcy and collapse. This also impacted Korea's Banglim Spinning and Yunseong Spinning, forcing them to sell off large portions of their assets and downsize their operations.

Seo tirelessly traveled between Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines in an effort to recover his business but ultimately failed to do so, passing away in 1976 at the age of 62.

Recognizing his patriotism and contributions to Korea's economic development, the Korean government posthumously awarded him the Camellia Medal of the Order of Civil Merit in 1976. Upon the opening of its new building in 2013, the Korean Embassy in Japan installed a historical hall named Dongmyeongwan (Dongmyeong Pavilion), derived from his pen name. In 2015, it commissioned and displayed a bust of him. Furthermore, the newly constructed ambassador's residence in 2024 was named Dongmyeongjae. Nov. 1 of each year is designated as Seo Gab-ho Day to honor the late chairman's noble love for his country.

"Chairman Seo's donations and investments went beyond financial contributions," OKA

Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup said. "They elevated our nation's standing and played a vital role in the development of the Korean community in Japan and our country's economy. We designate him as the Overseas Korean of the Month for October so that his patriotism and dedication will not be forgotten."

The OKA identifies compatriots who have contributed to the development of the Republic of Korea or to enhancing the status of Koreans in their countries of residence, selecting and announcing them monthly as the Overseas Korean of the Month. The previous honorees include Kim Pyeong-jin (former president of the Jeju Development Association in Japan), Hong Myeong-gi (former chairman of the M&L Hong Foundation), Im Cheon-taek (independence activist), Park Byeong-heon (former head of the Korean Residents Union in Japan), Park No-hak (former president of the Return of Detained Sakhalin Koreans Association), Lee Ui-gyeong (independence activist) and Dr. Seo Se-mo (medical doctor). 장

Recipient of Mugunghwa Medal of Order of Civil Merit on 19th World Korean Day

Awarded for her contributions to pioneering Korean American community and establishing global nursing network

The 19th World Korean Day commemorative ceremony awarded the Mugunghwa Medal, the highest civilian honor in Korea, to Yoo Boon-ja, president of the Somang Society in the United States. The Mugunghwa Medal is the highest-grade medal a civilian can receive from the government, and is a recognition of Yoo's contributions to the Korean American community in the U.S. and her global social service.

The World Korean Day commemoration ceremony was held in grandeur on Oct. 2 at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel in Seoul. It was attended by President Lee Jae Myung, key domestic figures and 370 Korean association presidents from 67 countries worldwide. Yoo was unable to attend the ceremony due to personal circumstances; the medal will be delivered later via the Consulate General in Los Angeles.

Yoo is regarded as a pioneer of the Korean American community and the godmother of Korean American nurses. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1968, she worked as a nurse at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Texas for approximately 30 years, dedicating herself to strengthening the rights and professional standing of Korean American nurses. In Korea, she previously served as the director of the Nursing Division at the Korean Red Cross.

From nurse to Korean American community leader

In 1971, she founded the Korean American Nurses Association of Southern California and served as its inaugural president. In 1975, she established the Korean American Nurses Association and served as its first and second president. She supported Korean American nurses struggling with English communication barriers and threats of lawsuits, helping them to obtain Registered Nurse (RN) certification and strengthening their capabilities. As the second president of the RN



Yoo Boon-ja, president of the Somang Society

Class in 1972, she contributed to revitalizing the Korean American nursing community and played a significant role in helping countless Korean nurses establish themselves as professionals.

In 2007, Yoo transferred her ownership of the restaurant franchise Busy Bee, which she had operated for 32 years, and sought a new calling after retirement. Drawing on her nursing experience, she began lecturing under the theme "A Beautiful Life, A Beautiful Ending," emphasizing the importance of preparing for a dignified old age and death. This led to the establishment of the nonprofit Somang Society organization.

The Somang Society has the aim of "well-aging" and "well-dying," and has launched various initiatives starting with a living will campaign, and including organ and body donation, hospice education and a movement to simplify funeral procedures.

Yoo emphasized in an interview with Yonhap News Agency, "Instead of having death 'done to you' without preparation, facing death through calmly organizing one's daily life and surroundings is the path that will benefit oneself, one's family and society."

"Working as a nurse, I saw many patients living for five



to six years in a vegetative state, causing suffering to their families. I have worked toward ‘well-dying’ in order to prevent the waste of social medical resources.”

Somang Society and ‘well-dying’ movement

A living will is a document that records decisions regarding organ and body donation, the scope of medical treatment in emergencies, funeral arrangements, and plans for the use of assets and condolence money. It requires the signatures of two witnesses. Yoo particularly pointed out that first-generation Korean Americans sacrificed everything for their children while neglecting retirement planning, emphasizing the importance of preparation to reduce tragic deaths in old age.

The Somang Society also operates the six-week Bereavement Family Camp to help those who have lost family members overcome loneliness and anger and prepare for their own death. Yoo herself is a bereaved family member who lost her husband 15 years ago. She set an example by donating the approximately US\$30,000 in condolence money received at her husband’s funeral to the Somang Society.

Yoo’s activities have expanded beyond the U.S. to the global stage. In 2009, she launched the “Well of Hope Project” in Chad, Africa, in cooperation with the Korean international relief organization Good Neighbors. Chad is an extremely poor country where many residents suffer from illness due to drinking contaminated water amid severe water shortages. According to the IMF, Chad’s per capita GDP in 2020 was \$741, with 80 percent of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day and life expectancy at just 53 years.

In February 2010, approaching her 18th birthday, Yoo visited the village of Ndou, south of N’Djamena, the capital of Chad, and dug the first well. Witnessing the local residents forced to quench their thirst with muddy water solidified her calling. When clear water gushed from the first well, completed in just three days, the entire village cheered. Yoo remembered this as “the sound of life.”

The Well of Hope campaign subsequently expanded, receiving enthusiastic support from the Korean community. Even during the 2008 financial crisis, Koreans participated by selling wedding rings or splitting their salaries to donate. To date, 451 wells have been installed in Chad, providing clean water to approximately 450,000 people. The cost to install one well is about \$3,000, benefiting 1,000 local residents.

Bridge between life and death: Yoo Boon-ja’s calling

The well project also expanded into education. Beginning



Yoo Boon-ja held a publication celebration for her autobiography, “Tomorrow, a Different Sun Rises,” in 2006 at the Radisson Wilshire Plaza Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, attended by over 200 family members, friends and dignitaries.



Yoo receives the Ellis Island Award presented by the Ellis Island Honors Society (EIHS) in May 2025.

with the establishment of the first Hope School in 2013, five schools have now been built in Chad. At the opening ceremony for the first school, Yoo shed tears as she urged the students, “Study hard and become great people.” Funds raised through the Hope Society total \$1,684,200.

In May 2025, Yoo received the Ellis Island award from the Ellis Island Honors Society (EIHS), given to those who have contributed to the development of American society. EIHS highly commended Yoo for her contributions to medical education through research on dementia and family caregiving, as well as organ donation campaigns.

Her publications include “Tomorrow, a Different Sun Rises” and “That’s Why Life is Beautiful,” which embody her philosophy and spirit of service.

Yoo has brought hope to the Korean community and around the world as a nurse, a volunteer and a leader. She lives by the principle that “Sharing saves lives,” drawing from the wellspring of love deep within her heart. The wells and schools in Chad, the growth of Korean nurses and the well-dying movement are the legacies of her dedication.

Yoo’s life transcends mere personal achievement; it is a bridge connecting the Korean diaspora with a love of humanity. Her story continues to plant seeds of hope in someone’s heart today. 🌱

Next year's World Korean Association Conference: first test of initiative led by Korean associations

‘Compatriot events should be led by compatriots’; ‘OKA should provide administrative and budgetary support’

‘Organizing intern programs, next-generation leader forums, and global youth conference. We need to open path for next-generation proportional representation’

“I do not wish for the government, such as the Overseas Koreans Agency, to host events for overseas compatriots. The structure should be one where Korean associations take the lead, with the government providing administrative and budgetary support,” Ko Sang-gu, president of the World Association of Korean Associations (WAKA), said in a recent interview with Yonhap News.

“The World Korean Association Conference, previously hosted by the OKA, has now shifted to a Korean association-led organization starting with this year’s event. The greatest achievement is gained through enduring conflict and pain.

“We held numerous steering committee meetings, going through cycles of breakdown and restart, until we finally reached an agreement. The fundamental principle of democracy is not forcing through decisions through tyranny of the majority but persuading even the single dissenting voice,” he said.

“Had the agreement fallen through, this convention would have been remembered as a negative experience. We talked and persuaded over two days until our tongues were sore. That’s how committed we were.”

‘Disputes to be mediated locally. Dispute Mediation Committee to be made permanent’

Regarding recurring disputes within Korean associations worldwide, he said: “Government intervention only deepens legal battles and emotional rifts. The overseas compatriot community, which understands local public opinion, bylaws and practices better than anyone, must resolve these issues themselves.”

To this end, he outlined a plan: “We will establish a permanent Dispute Mediation Committee within the WAKA to neutrally verify facts and find common ground through mediation and arbitration. If agreement cannot be reached, decisions will be made based on majority opinion and legitimacy, but bias is strictly prohibited.”

Throughout the interview, Ko emphasized the next generation and the sustainability of the Korean Wave.



Ko Sang-gu, president of the World Assembly of Korean Associations, is interviewed by Yonhap News Agency.

“The blood and sweat of overseas Koreans underpin the global reach of ‘hallyu,’ K-food and K-culture,” he said. “Without building on this foundation, the craze will fade.” He argued that short-term industrial facility tours and culture-focused homeland visitation experiences have limitations. He proposed a “reverse internship system,” sending overseas youth to Korean companies and institutions for six months or longer, as a core solution.

‘Foundation of Korean Wave is diaspora. To sustain it, we must strengthen its roots’

“We must place the next generation of overseas compatriots in Korean SMEs, midsize companies, and content, food, manufacturing and IT workplaces. They should experience the ‘real Korea’ -- from commuting and subway rides to lunch breaks -- to foster identity and networks. This can be started without a large

budget if companies can provide minimum wage-level salaries, while the government and local authorities support airfare and basic settlement costs.

“We will broaden the spectrum to include content companies like SM, JYP and YG; K-food franchises; and manufacturing, semiconductor and IT workplaces,” he said. “We must meticulously design participation periods and qualifications within legal boundaries to lower barriers to entry.”

Regarding nurturing the next generation of overseas compatriots, Ko proposed a phased model: “First, convene a ‘Next Generation Leaders Forum’ to gather youth with proven leadership, then expand this into a ‘Global Youth Conference.’”

He stressed that accommodation, meals and programs should be jointly provided by the public and private sectors to minimize participant costs, and that a tightly woven network enabling practical exchanges must be established.

Regarding the budget for overseas compatriot policies, he raised his voice in stating, “While compatriots are verbally recognized as a precious national asset, the reality that the budget fails to support this is regrettable. A groundbreaking increase commensurate with the scale of 7 million people is necessary.”

Leaders of overseas Korean organizations taking proportional representation seats could breed division

“Having leaders of overseas Korean organizations directly take proportional representation seats could breed division,” he emphasized regarding political participation. “Transcending left and right, we must open the way for innovative next-generation overseas compatriots in their 40s who hold South Korean citizenship to represent the interests of overseas Koreans based on principles.”

Ko stressed, “Today’s spread of the Korean Wave is not solely the result of government budgets; it is built upon the trust and networks overseas compatriots have cultivated locally. We must recognize this contribution and prioritize support for overseas compatriot businesses. Policies using taxpayer money to support local foreign companies competing with Korean businesses should be reconsidered.”

When asked about his expectations for the new administration and the OKA, he said: “I hope this government’s message of ‘people’s sovereignty’ extends to overseas Koreans. I hope there will be an institutionalized structure where overseas Koreans take the lead and the government provides support. Next year’s World Korean Association Conference will be the first test. I hope the government shows its investment in youth and the next generation through the budget.”

Ko, who operates 150 K-Markets, Korean food distribution stores, in Vietnam, is a global entrepreneur who has served as vice chairperson of the Asia-Pacific Region for the 21st Peaceful Unification Advisory Council, chairperson of the 18th World Korean Business Convention and chairperson of the 2nd Jang Bogo Korean Entrepreneurs Award Council. He is also an honorary ambassador for North Chungcheong Province. 



President Lee Jae Myung (5th from L) and OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup (4th from L) sing the national anthem with attendees at the 19th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony held at the Grand Walkerhill Seoul Hotel in Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, on Oct. 2. Ko Sang-gu, president of the World Assembly of Korean Associations, is third from the left. (Photo provided by Presidential Press Office)



President Ko Sang-gu delivers remarks at the 2025 4th Korean Association Public Diplomacy Seminar held at the National Assembly Members' Office Building on Sept. 26. Attendees included Lee Jae-kang, chairman of the Overseas Koreans Committee of the Democratic Party of Korea; Kim Gun, secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee of the People Power Party; Kim Young-bae, secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee of the Democratic Party of Korea; and OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup (2nd from L).



Chairman Ko Sang-gu delivers remarks at the World Korean Association Presidents Workshop hosted by the World Assembly of Korean Associations at the Grand Walkerhill Seoul Hotel in Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, on Oct. 2.

OKA Commissioner Kim discusses cooperation with Chae Yu-ri, president of Koryoin Association in Kazakhstan

Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup met with Chae Yu-ri, president of the Kazakhstan Koryoin Association, and her visiting delegation on Oct. 14. They exchanged views on matters of interest to the Koryoin community in Kazakhstan, such as the establishment of a K-park, and discussed future cooperation plans, the OKA announced.

"Kazakhstan's Koryoin community is a valuable resource for developing cooperation and friendly relations between Korea and Kazakhstan across various fields," Kim said. "The Korean government will continue to support our Koryoin compatriots in Kazakhstan to maintain their ties with their homeland."

Chae explained the construction of a K-Park, which is being established to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the settlement



OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup (4th from L) meets with Chae Yu-ri, president of the Koryoin Association in Kazakhstan, at the OKA headquarters on Oct. 14 to discuss support for the Koryoin community in Kazakhstan and other matters.

of the Koryoin people in Kazakhstan, as well as the Alatau City project in which the local Koryoin community is taking a leading role. She requested the OKA's interest and cooperation to ensure the success of this project.

The Kazakhstan government is promoting the construction of Alatau City, aiming to establish a new hub in Eurasia. The Koryoin Association in Kazakhstan is pursuing the establishment of a K-Park, a Korean cultural and business complex spanning approximately 99,000 square meters, within

this new city.

"I hope this project is successfully completed and becomes a meaningful milestone in the history of the overseas Korean community," Kim said. "I will support the project to ensure its successful completion."

Overseas compatriots residing in Korea: 'We face housing and employment insecurity, but we hope to acquire Korean citizenship'

OKA conducts survey to support compatriot residents in Korea, including Chinese and Koryoin

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup) announced the results of a survey assessing the status of resident compatriots in Korea on Oct. 16. According to the survey, which included questionnaires and in-depth interviews with 1,145 individuals, as well as a literature review, most reside in Korea under the overseas Korean (F-4) visa. Among them, Chinese Koreans account for 77 percent but are declining, while Koryoin-saram make up 12 percent but are rapidly increasing.

Residents living in Korea for over 10 years reached 60 percent. Their housing was primarily rental, not owned, and they faced anxieties, such as rent increases, refusal of contract renewals and non-return of security deposits. The perception of being people from their country of origin (38 percent) was higher than being citizens of



A policy discussion meeting is held at the National Assembly on Aug. 29 to support the settlement of overseas compatriots in Korea.

the Republic of Korea (29 percent), indicating a coexisting dual identity. Sixty-eight percent responded that they have plans to acquire Korean nationality.

Thirty percent experienced mental exhaustion or burnout due to difficulties adapting to life in Korea, while 50 percent faced challenges with academic guidance, education costs and the obtaining of

educational information despite having elementary, middle or high school-aged children. Among respondents aged 50 and above, 82 percent stated they lacked "sufficient financial resources to prepare for serious illness." They hoped for government support in the following order of issues: employment (24 percent), income (21 percent), housing (17 percent) and health/medical care (16 percent).

OKA Commissioner Kim: 'Overseas Korean media, please propose good policies'

Appeal to participants of World Korean Journalists Conference held at Overseas Koreans Welcome Center

"The overseas Korean media, which serves as a bridge between the OKA and the overseas Korean community, should provide good proposals so that the agency can create sound policies for overseas Koreans and improve its systems," said Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup on Oct. 14.

Kim delivered a congratulatory address at the 27th World Korean Journalists Conference and 18th World Korean Journalists International Symposium hosted by the World Korean Journalists Association at the Overseas Koreans Welcome Center in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon.

The symposium, themed "80 Years of Division: Peace on the Korean Peninsula and the Role of Overseas Media," was attended by over 30 Korean journalists from 20 countries.

"Peace, exchanges and cooperation on the Korean Peninsula are fundamental conditions for our continued growth, and overcoming the current division is an extremely important task," Kim said in his congratulatory address. "To this end, the role of overseas Korean media outlets in unifying the opinions of the compatriot community and shaping public sentiment is paramount."

The journalists visited Incheon's Ganghwa, South Chungcheong's Geumsan, and South Gyeongsang's Changwon, Jinhae and Masan until Oct. 17. They covered various local tourism, industries and specialty products while also holding a discussion forum to explore the development direction of the overseas Korean media.



OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup delivered an address of encouragement to over 30 Korean journalists from 20 countries at the 18th World Korean Journalists International Symposium on Oct. 14.

OKA holds settlement support briefing for permanent returnees in Sakhalin

Introducing entry procedures, support details, application schedule with Korean Red Cross

The Overseas Koreans Agency held a briefing session on Oct. 20 at the Sakhalin Korean Cultural Center in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia, to explain the government's support program for the permanent return, settlement and livelihood stabilization of Sakhalin Koreans.

This session was arranged to explain the return and settlement procedures for eligible returnees, including accompanying family members. Officials from the OKA and the Korean Red Cross visited the site to provide explanations in person, while relevant agencies, such as the Ministry of Justice, participated via videoconference.

The OKA supports the permanent return of our compatriots and their families who migrated to Sakhalin due to forced mobilization during the Japanese colonial period but were unable to return to



A settlement support briefing for permanent returnees is held in Sakhalin on Oct. 20.

their homeland after liberation.

Sakhalin Koreans selected for permanent repatriation and their accompanying family members are eligible for support under the Special Act on Support for Sakhalin Koreans, including: ▲ Transportation costs and initial settlement expenses necessary for repatriation, ▲ Operational costs for residential and living facilities and ▲ Rental housing assistance. Approximately 30,000 Koreans reside in Sakhalin, including about

5,000 first- and second-generation compatriots.

"The OKA will systematically support the permanent return of Sakhalin Koreans who have not yet returned to their homeland, and will continue to strive for their settlement and stable living conditions in Korea," OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup said.

Sept. 29 - Oct. 1: 2025 World Korean Association Conference

Oct. 2: 19th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony

Oct. 20: Briefing session on support programs for Sakhalin Koreans' permanent return, settlement, livelihood stabilization

Oct. 21-22: 2nd World Korean Business Forum and Export Consultation Fair

OKA Announcements

Call for submissions: Essays about 'Overseas Korean Business Internship' experience

For 2025 program graduates, submit via Hansangnet, 10 winners to be selected, including grand prize, deadline Nov. 7

The Overseas Koreans Agency is holding a 2025 experience essay contest from Oct. 20 to Nov. 7 for its Domestic Youth Internship Program at overseas Korean companies, which aims to strengthen the global capabilities of young Koreans.

The contest category is essays (free topic), and the target applicants are 2025 program graduates (20th cohort). Entries should freely describe the overall experience, achievements, lessons learned and suggestions arising from the internship participation process.

Submissions are accepted via the Hansangnet website (www.hansang.net) under "My Space (Internship Activity Management - Internship Experience Essay)." ▲ Experience Essay (2,000 words or more, must include at least three photos) and the following must be uploaded as a single file: ▲ Application Form, ▲ Copyright Usage Agreement, and ▲ Personal Information Collection, Use and Third-Party Provision Consent Form. The file name should be submitted as "Country Name_Applicant's Full Name." The submission deadline is Nov. 7.

Judging will be conducted by a contest judging committee involving external members from Nov. 10-14. The evaluation criteria are ▲ Content relevance (reflection of project purpose/intent, provision of information - 40 points), ▲ Content communication (clarity of message, use of supporting materials like images - 30 points) and ▲ Originality (creativity in format/composition - 30 points). Results will be announced



A poster for the "Overseas Korean Business Internship" experience essay contest

Nov. 21.

Awards will be given to a total of 10 entries: One Grand Prize (OKA Commissioner Award, 300,000 won in prize money), one Excellence Award (200,000 won), one Merit Award (100,000 won) and seven Encouragement Awards (gift cards worth 100,000 won each). The organizer will bear any taxes or fees on the prize money.

The copyright of submitted works remains with the entrants. However, winners must agree to allow the use of their winning entries for public interest

promotional purposes, including necessary modifications, alterations or reprocessing, for 10 years from the date of the award announcement. Works found to infringe intellectual property rights, such as plagiarism, theft or unauthorized use, will be excluded from judging. If such infringement is confirmed after an award is given, the award will be revoked and the prize money recovered. Submitted materials will not be returned. No additional submissions or modifications are permitted after the deadline. The schedule is subject to change at the organizer's discretion.

For inquiries, please contact the operations office (okaintern@gmail.com, 032-466-3225).

Personal information will be collected and used for contest administration, promotion of winning entries and institutional project promotion. It will be retained for five years from the date that the winners are announced. Details regarding third-party provision and entrustment are specified in the contest guidelines.

2025 인구주택 총조사 10.22.~11.18.

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