

Park Kyung-soo, former principal of Kyoto International High School: 'Building bridges between Japan and Korea through baseball'

Korean school anthem beginning with 'East Sea' broadcast live across Japan on NHK



"Across the East Sea, the land of Yamado is the land where our blessed ancestors used to dream..."

This is how the school song of Kyoto International High School (Kyoto Kokusai), an ethnic Korean school that became the first foreign school to win the Japan National High School Baseball Tournament (Koshien), begins. The lyrics of Kyoto Kokusai's school anthem convey the idea that Korea and Japan have been interacting for thousands of years, and that our ancestors came to Japan and put down roots. The ethnic Korean school's Korean-language school song, which begins with Donghae (East Sea), rang out at the Koshien tournament, where every match was broadcast live across the country on NHK, Japan's public broadcaster. Local media also took a keen interest in Kyoto Kokusai's Koshien victory.

"Both coaches and players are encouraged," Park Kyung-soo, 64, the former principal of Kyoto Kokusai, told the media. "I dream of Korean and Japanese children playing together and building bridges between Japan and Korea through baseball."

"I had actually planned to change the school song to Japanese during my tenure," he said, confessing, "It was because I was concerned about student safety due to protests from some right-wing Japanese who were against the Korean school song."

Kyoto International Academy was founded in 1947 as Kyoto

Joseon Middle School, and in 1958, the school was approved for incorporation as Kyoto Korean Academy, with the high school opening in 1963. Following the Korean government's approval to establish a junior high school and high school, the school was officially authorized by the Japanese government in 2003.

The Kyoto Kokusai baseball team was founded in 1999, but most of the players were inexperienced in baseball, and the team was defeated 0-58 in its first practice game, making advancement to the Koshien a distant dream at the time.

However, through consistently improving its skills, Kyoto Kokusai's baseball team began reaching the top four of the regional tournament in 2016 and won the Spring 2019 regional tournament, making it one of Kyoto's best-known high school baseball teams.

The school's Korean school song has at times made it a target of attacks from Japan's right wing.

"The Korean school song is sometimes criticized by the Japanese right wing through websites and Twitter," Park said.

These comments argue that as the school is an official school authorized by the Japanese government, calling the Sea of Japan the East Sea is inappropriate.

The issue of how the East Sea is labeled by the international community has at times been a subject of diplomatic warfare between Japan and South Korea. For this reason, it is possible that the right-wing attacks will intensify when Kyoto Kokusai's school song is played at the Koshien competition, which will be broadcast live across Japan.

"It's been sung for 70 years," Park said. "If we can't sing the Korean school song, the very meaning of going to the national competition will fade. The alumni and the diaspora community want to sing the school song in our own language. Japanese students (who love K-pop) also think so."

Speaking at a special lecture to strengthen the capabilities of Grade 8 and below staff at Hanbat National University on Aug. 30, Park said he was proud of his students' hard work and tremendous success under difficult circumstances and advised them to "always carry out their work with positive thinking and strength in public life."

He began his civil service career in 1984 and worked his way up through the Ministry of Education, Consul General for Education at the Consulate General of Japan in Osaka and served as principal of Kyoto Kokusai from April 2017 to March of this year, laying the foundation for the school's Koshien victory. 🇯🇵

Andy Kim: ‘Trump-Kim Jong-un handshake is showmanship; practical strategy neede’

Likely to be first Korean American to be elected to U.S. Senate; attended meeting on fatal shooting of Korean American women

Democratic Rep. Andy Kim (N.J.), the first person of Korean descent to run for the U.S. Senate, devalued former President Donald Trump’s handshake with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un as “showmanship” and said that a practical strategy, such as strengthening the trilateral relationship among the U.S., South Korea and Japan, is needed for Korean Peninsula policy.

Kim made the remarks to reporters after a meeting with journalists on Sept. 6 regarding the case of a 26-year-old Korean American woman who was killed by a police shooting in Fort Lee, regarding U.S.-Korea relations and Korean Peninsula policy should Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris get elected.

“(If Vice President Harris is elected), the work will continue to push forward the trilateral efforts that we saw at the Camp David summit between the U.S., South Korea and Japan,” he said, “alongside expanding the U.S.-South Korea investment partnership in innovative technology and economics, which is also a priority interest for Vice President Harris. There needs to be an effort to have a practical strategy (in U.S. policy on the Korean Peninsula), not just showmanship for the camera like when President Trump and Kim Jong Un shook hands.

“During the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-South Korea alliance and the South Korean president’s state visit, Vice President Harris played an important role, and my colleagues and I focused on strengthening the U.S.-South Korea relationship with her,” Kim said. “This is in stark contrast to what Mr. Trump has done.”

As for the outlook for the U.S. presidential election in November, he was cautious, saying that while Harris’ approval ratings are ahead of Trump in various polls, “You can’t make any assumptions when it comes to U.S. politics.”

At the same time, he emphasized: “I have high hopes that a



new generation of leadership will emerge. Working with Vice President Harris has made me believe that she is the right person (for president). Mr. Trump, on the other hand, would be a disaster for the United States.”

Kim, a Democrat who has been elected to the House of Representatives for New Jersey three times, won the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate in the state’s June primary. New Jersey is considered a heavily Democratic state, with Democrats holding the U.S. Senate seat in the state for more than 50 years since 1972. As such, barring a major upset, Kim will win his election.

The press conference on this day was organized to share residents’ concerns and discuss measures to prevent a repeat of the July police shooting death of a Korean American woman in her twenties with bipolar disorder in Fort Lee, New Jersey, a heavily Korean American neighborhood.

As for the punishment of the officer who fired the shots, Kim said: “It’s too early to say because it’s an ongoing investigation. We will continue to monitor the progress.” 장