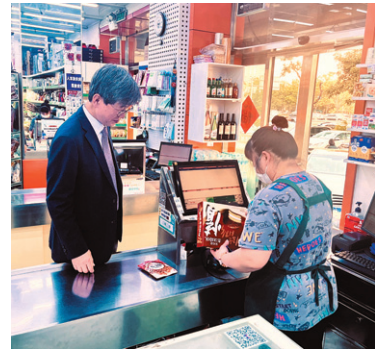




Window into Overseas Koreans



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- Exploring role of foreign media in public diplomacy; 2024 World Korean Journalists Congress opens
- Policy in Focus - OKA to offer overseas Korean consultation service without international call charges
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Ratification of Hague Convention on Intercountry Child Adoption on horizon

Join us in taking steps to strengthen state accountability in adoption

The Hague is a place of great historical significance for Koreans, with the Hague Secret Emissary Affair coming to mind whenever The Hague is mentioned. It is also home to the General Assembly, special committees and the Permanent Secretariat of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, which has established itself as a judicial and administrative cooperation organization in the field of international private law, including family and child protection, civil litigation and commercial law.

The Hague Conference on Private International Law oversees about 40 conventions, and the Republic of Korea joined the Hague Conference on Private International Law in August 1997 and has ratified and implemented a total of four conventions, including the Hague Convention on the Abduction of Children. The Hague Convention on Intercountry Child Adoption has been ratified by 106 countries. The Republic of Korea signed the convention in 2013 and is expected to ratify it in 2025.

On July 18, 2023, the Special Law on Domestic Adoption was amended, and the Law on Intercountry Adoption was enacted and promulgated. These two laws are also the implementing laws of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. Once the new and revised adoption laws are in effect, local governments will be responsible for determining and protecting children for adoption, while the Adoption Policy Committee of the Ministry of Health and Welfare will carry out core procedures, such as screening and matching prospective adoptive parents based on the best interests of the child. However, some tasks that require specialized expertise will be carried out in cooperation with private agencies.

The Adoption Policy Committee Secretariat, which is at the core of the Adoption Policy Committee's operations, will be established at the Child Rights Protection Agency to carry out each of the core procedures of domestic adoption for children under protection and international adoption for all children living in Korea. The centralization of the adoption application window at the Child Rights Protection Agency will reduce unnecessary wait times and increase convenience for prospective adoptive parents by providing standardized guidance and training.

Intercountry adoption procedures will also be established to mutually verify and guarantee the records and eligibility of the child



Jung Ik-joong,
director of the Child
Rights Protection
Agency

and adoptive parents for all adopted children who move between countries, and to check and verify the child's adjustment after adoption. The adoption responsibilities of states, which were previously limited to children under protection, will be extended to all children. The Child Rights Protection Agency is making efforts to standardize adoption procedures, as well as preparations for implementation, such as creating a practical guide for each procedure and establishing a cooperation system with related organizations at home and abroad.

In addition, all adoption records that were scattered among adoption agencies, child welfare facilities and local governments will be transferred to the Child Rights Protection Agency to manage adoption information transparently and systematically. Adoptees will no longer have to search for records when requesting disclosure of adoption information but will be able to receive all information in one place. The adoption archives are essential to preserve about 250,000 adoption records and ensure adoptees' right to know. In order to secure the budget and manpower needed to build an adoption archive, the public, including overseas adoptees, must show their interest and support.

The reformed adoption system will come into effect on July 19, 2025. The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption of Children is also being prepared for ratification around this time. In 2025, we hope that The Hague will be remembered not only as a place where Korea's sovereignty was once represented but also as a city where Korea's commitment to the rights of children is recognized around the world.

As we look forward to another historic change in child welfare in Korea, we need the cooperation of the government, the National Assembly, private organizations and academia, as well as the attention of the entire nation. We invite our readers to join us in taking steps to strengthen state responsibility for adoption in Korea. 🇰🇷





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

2024 Future Leaders' Conference is smash hit; 'sharing diverse life experiences from each country'

Participants from 19 countries agree on OKA's project to include Korean development in overseas textbooks

The 2024 Future Leaders' Conference, organized by the Overseas Koreans Agency, concluded on May 3 after four days of events.

Starting with the opening ceremony on April 30, 68 next-generation leaders from 19 countries participated in the event at the Westin Josun Seoul in Jung-gu, Seoul, to better understand their home country and interact with participants from different backgrounds. According to the participants, being able to share their diverse backgrounds and life experiences was beneficial.

"It was meaningful to meet people from all over the world," said Erin Cho (Korean name: Cho Ae-Rin, 39), who served as the president of the Korean American Bar Association (KABA) of Southern California. "I will do my best to promote Korean culture in the U.S. and strengthen ties with other Koreans."

"Growing up with a European father and a Koryo mother, I naturally thought my identity was Korean," said Rabrenyuk Oleg, 41, a fourth-generation Korean who works as a cardiac surgeon in Kazakhstan. "It was interesting to be able to talk to people from other professions besides the medical field during the convention."

Dr. Se-jeong Park, 32, vice president of the Korean Medical Association of Great Britain, who works as a doctor in the United Kingdom, said, "Korean people from various backgrounds, such as adoptees, multicultural families and Koreans, all have Korean roots. It was a time to learn and understand the similarities and differences between us."

'Let's have pride and dignity,' OKA Deputy Commissioner Choi Young-han

During the conference, participants took part in various programs, including a visit to the Prime Minister's Office, industrial tours, traditional cultural experiences and thematic discussions. Before the closing ceremony, there were presentations on a global talent business, unification policies and the results of group discussions.

"We will actively support overseas talents to work in the Korean government and public organizations by attracting them to Korea," said Ahn Bo-hong, a human resources information planner at the Ministry of Personnel Management, at the global talent business



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briefing, while Hwang Tae-hee, director of international cooperation at the Ministry of Unification, explained the economic and social situation in North Korea and the direction of the unification policy.

Through the competition, the participants agreed to actively participate in the "Spreading Korea's Development Story" project, which is a core project of the OKA. In this regard, they plan to return to their home countries to find local supporters and continue to expand the next-generation network. In addition, they plan to actively participate in the OKA's policies to foster the next generation by holding regional future leader conferences later this year.

"We support the next generation of Korean leaders who are active on the global stage, and we look forward to seeing them grow with pride and dignity as Koreans," Choi Young-han, deputy commissioner of the OKA, said in her closing remarks. 장

1 Next-generation Korean leaders who represented their respective debate groups pose for a photo with Choi Young-han (4th from L), deputy commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, at the closing ceremony of the 2024 Future Leaders' Conference on May 3. From left to right are Jonathan Shin (USA), Andrei Kim (Kazakhstan), Minjin Kim (U.K.), Sangyup Lee (USA) and Junhong Jeon (USA).

2 (From L to R) Attorney Erin Cho, Rabrenyuk Oleg, Korean American Medical Association of Great Britain Vice President Dr. Park Se-jeong, Attorney Jung Joon and Dong Woo-seok pose for a photo at the 2024 Future Leaders' Conference, organized by the Overseas Koreans Agency.

Exploring role of foreign media in public diplomacy; 2024 World Korean Journalists Congress opens

‘Overseas Korean media should take lead in promoting Korea’s development,’
OKA Commissioner Lee

The 24th World Korean Journalists Congress, which explores the role of overseas media in informing the Korean community about political and economic developments in Korea, was held April 29 at the Press Center in Jung-gu, Seoul.

The event, organized by the World Association of Korean Journalists (President Kim Myung-gon) under the theme of “Public Diplomacy and the Role of Overseas Korean Media,” was attended by more than 60 Korean journalists from 20 countries.

The opening ceremony was attended by Kim Seok-ki of the People Power Party, chairman of the Committee for Overseas Koreans; Park Soo-hyun, member-elect of the National Assembly for the Democratic Party of Korea; Lee Key-cheol, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency; Kim Sung-gon, chairman of the Peace Foundation; Kim Deok-ryong, chairman of the Kim Young-sam Democracy Center; Park Jong-beom, president of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations; Lee Gu-hong, chairman of the Former Korean Americans Foundation; Cho Rong-je, chairman of the Overseas Koreans Forum; and Jung Kwang-il, co-chairman of the League of Overseas Korean Voters.

Lee Jae-myung, chairman of the Democratic Party of Korea; Park Byung-seok, former speaker of the National Assembly; Lee Jong-chan, chairman of the National Liberation Council; Kim Kwan-young, governor of North Jeolla Province; Lee Cheol-woo, governor of North Gyeongsang Province; and Lee Sang-ik, governor of Hampyeong-gun, sent written congratulatory messages.

“Korea is the only country in the world that has overcome the ravages of colonization and war to achieve EU-level democracy and economic development at the same time,” said OKA Commissioner Lee, a keynote lecturer at the opening ceremony. “In order to take a step forward, it is important for Korean journalists to play a role as a bridge between the 7 million overseas Koreans and their home countries.”

In particular, he called for the cooperation of Korean journalists to vitalize the OKA’s work in promoting education in Korean-language schools and the inclusion of foreign textbooks. Lee also introduced



Lee Key-cheol, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, delivers a keynote lecture on public diplomacy to communicate Korea’s development at the World Korean Journalists Congress.

the changes in overseas Korean policy since its establishment, the agency’s mission, vision, six policy goals and ways of working.


Among the major achievements were the expansion of volunteer fees and training for Hangeul school teachers and the next generation’s native language training, the inclusion of Korean political and economic developments in textbooks used to educate overseas compatriots, inviting marginalized overseas Koreans to Korea, establishing a

budget to support overseas Koreans in times of crisis overseas and allowing overseas Koreans to use the priority lane for citizens when entering Incheon International Airport.

Organized by World Association of Korean Journalists 60 Korean journalists from 20 countries participated

“The OKA will communicate with ease with the people and observe everyday life and context, and provide practical help by removing nails and thorns,” Lee said. “The support of public diplomacy is essential for the work of the OKA to produce practical results,” he added, requesting “compatriot journalists proactively fulfill their roles.”

During the conference, which ran through May 3, participants visited Jeonju, North Jeolla Province, as well as Hampyeong, Damyang, Jangseong and Gwangju in South Jeolla Province, and conducted interviews to introduce various local tourism, industries and specialties to participants, as well as held discussions and association meetings to explore the development direction of the overseas Korean media.

The event was sponsored by the OKA, Jeonju, Jangseong County, Damyang County, Hampyeong County, the Jeonnam Tourism Foundation, the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations, and the Geumsan Ginseng and Herbal Medicine Industry Promotion Center. The World Association of Korean Journalists is an organization under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, with a membership base of more than 180 Korean-language media outlets in more than 40 countries. 

OKA to offer overseas Korean consultation service without international call charges

Data calls are also now available; Consular Complaints 24 has been reorganized as Compatriot 365 Citizen Portal



The Overseas Korean Service Support Center, part of the OKA, has launched a service that allows free consultations using data calls. Pictured here is the Overseas Korean Service Support Center at the Twin Tree Tower in Jongno-gu, Seoul.

The Overseas Koreans Agency has launched a service that will allow overseas Koreans living abroad to access civil consultation services without incurring international call charges.

The Overseas Korean Service Support Center (Unified Complaints Office) under the OKA will begin accepting consultations via data calls (web calls) today.

Launched in June last year, the OKA has established the Overseas Koreans 365 Citizen Call Center (02-6747-00404) to provide overseas Koreans living in Korea and abroad with telephone counseling services in five languages 24 hours a day.

However, overseas residents had to pay expensive international call fees to use the call center.

To improve this, the agency launched a KakaoTalk consultation service in January and added a free data call service.

In the second half of the year, the OKA will also add an online chat (web chat) channel to make it more convenient to use the call center.

In addition, the existing Overseas Koreans Consular Service 24 website has been completely reorganized into the Overseas Korean 365 Service Portal (www.g4k.go.kr).

The portal was established so that overseas Koreans can search, inquire and apply for civil administrative services, such as overseas citizen registration and passport reissuance applications in one place.

“We will continue to improve our services, including responding to complaints using online services, so that compatriots can experience convenience in real life,” said Kim Yeon-sik, head of the Overseas Korean Service Support Center. 🇰🇷

‘Becoming easier to report overseas relocations’; OKA implementing revised law

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced it has revised the Enforcement Decree and Implementing Rules of the Overseas Migration Act to make it more convenient for people who want to move overseas for marriage or employment.

The Overseas Migration Act stipulates matters necessary for the migration process, including notification of overseas migration and registration of overseas migration agencies.

According to the law, migrants who are related by marriage, unrelated migrants for employment and local migrants who leave the country for other purposes and obtain long-term residence status, such as permanent residence, must report to the OKA or the relevant diplomatic mission. It is also necessary to register with the OKA if you intend to engage in an overseas migration agency business.

In the first enforcement rule, the OKA increased the upper limit on surety insurance by changing the period for signing up from “more than one year” to “one to three years.” This is to compensate for the problem that there was no upper limit on the subscription period in the situation where the amount of coverage was set, which meant that as the period increased, the number of subjects




OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol explains relevant policies at a meeting of the Overseas Koreans Policy Working Committee.

to be paid increased, reducing the amount that could be received per person.

In addition, the law has been revised to allow overseas migrants to report their migration without having to issue separate national tax payment certificates, customs tax payment certificates and local tax payment certificates, subject to their consent to access administrative information. The law also establishes grounds for the reissuance of the overseas migration confirmation letter, which has been happening in practice.

Previously, the confirmation was issued upon receipt of the overseas relocation notification, but it can now also be issued if the applicant requests it. In addition, the expiration date of the overseas migration confirmation has been removed to improve the convenience of citizens who require the confirmation letter.

“We have corrected the deficiencies in the system that had been pointed out through the revision of the law to improve convenience,” OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol said. “We will continue to improve the law and system so that overseas Koreans can receive convenient civil service.” 


OKA holds policy briefings for local governments on compatriot resettlement support, other issues

The Overseas Koreans Agency recently held a briefing session for the first time on overseas Korean policies for local governments in Korea. The idea is to flexibly and proactively respond to new issues, such as the increase in the number of compatriots living in Korea, and to establish a multifaceted overseas Korean policy by establishing cooperation channels with local governments.

The briefing session, held at the OKA office in Songdo, Incheon, was attended by representatives from nine metropolitan governments, including Incheon and Gyeonggi, and 10 local organizations, including Jecheon. The meeting introduced major overseas Korean policies and called for the interest and cooperation of local governments in identifying projects that can

happen in collaboration with the OKA for the mutual development of the home country and the Korean community.

The case of Jecheon was introduced at the briefing. The city has been promoting the migration and resettlement of Koryo compatriots to overcome its decline in population and secure a productive workforce.

“It is a great achievement that local governments, which are in direct contact with the lives of overseas Koreans living in Korea, came together to discuss support measures for the first time,” an OKA official said. “We will continue to expand cooperation between the central and local governments to help overseas Koreans settle in Korea.” 

'I try to see my biological parents through my appearance and understand them'

Doctor of physics, German adoptee Seong Gyeong-ju, working as McKinsey consultant in France



Seong Gyeong-ju, a French management consultant who visited Korea to attend the 2024 Future Leaders' Conference hosted by OKA

"There are many adoptees who have fantasies about their biological parents, but studying physics helped me approach things differently. I try to understand what I see, just as I can guess what kind of person my biological parents are through my appearance."

Seong Gyeong-ju (German name: Miriam Kroll, 45), a Korean adoptee from Germany, said, "When I stand in front of the mirror, I feel that my parents' genes have been passed on to me."

Seong recently visited Korea to attend the 2024 Future Leaders' Conference held by the Overseas Koreans Agency, which invited outstanding young talents who will lead the future of the Korean community in each country in an effort to establish their Korean identity and enhance their leadership capabilities.

"I know that in the past, when Korea's gross domestic product was similar to that of Sudan in Africa, everyone had a hard time making a living," she said. "It may have been a sacrifice on the part of the biological mother to choose adoption so that her child could grow up in a better environment. I'm sad, but I don't resent it."

"There is no happy beginning in any adoption, and every adoption has a sad story," she continued. "As a physicist, I tend to

accept issues logically rather than chasing fantasy. This may be what makes us different from other adoptees."

'After having a son, I became interested in Korean identity and my home country' Seong actively interacts with adoptees

Estimated to have been born on Dec. 20, 1979, Seong was initially entrusted to Gyeongju City Hall in North Gyeongsang Province and cared for at Baekilli Orphanage in Daegu. In May of the following year, she was adopted by a family in Stuttgart, Germany, through the Holt Children's Welfare Association.

She received a master's degree in physics from the University of Stuttgart and a doctorate in physics from KU Leuven, a Catholic university in Belgium. Since then, she has worked at Accenture, KPMG and Avanade, among other companies, and has been working as a management consultant at the

global consulting firm McKinsey France since last year.

Because of her differences in appearance, Seong naturally knew from a young age that she was an adoptee. However, she did not feel intimidated or discouraged but instead accepted it as something special that made her different from others.

Although she occasionally thought of her biological parents, she did not actively try to find her roots. She said that her belief that she does not want to affect the peaceful life of her biological family has not changed and will continue to be so in the future. Her wish is for her biological family to live in good health somewhere.

She was active in the Racines Coreennes, the largest adoptee organization in France, and the Korean Association of German Adoptees (KADeV), a community of Korean adoptees in Germany, and served as a director of the International Korean Adoptee Association (IKAA).

"Based on my unique multicultural experience and language skills as a Korean German, communicating with adoptees who share the same DNA is also a way for me to accept my identity," she said. "I want to be a source of strength to those in need." [장]

85-year-old Sakhalin compatriot, ‘I am touched by the warmth and hospitality of my home country’

60 people who ‘returned permanently’ entered Donghae Port; OKA Deputy Director Choi Young-han, ‘The motherland will always be by your side’

“I can’t believe my motherland’s embrace is so warm. I am deeply touched that I am finally fulfilling the wish of my father, who had longed for his hometown all his life.”

Sixty compatriots and descendants who immigrated to Sakhalin, Russia, due to forced conscription during the Japanese colonial period returned to the homeland they had dreamed of on May 11. Hwang Sun-nam, 85, the oldest person to enter the country, expressed her feelings about stepping foot on her homeland in her wheelchair.

The government selected a total of 261 people for the 2023 permanent return and settlement support for Sakhalin compatriots. Following the entry of 16 people on April 27, 60 people entered the country in a second group. The remaining 185 people will enter the country individually.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Key-cheol) and the Korean Red Cross (Chairman Kim Cheol-soo), which are carrying out the permanent repatriation project, warmly welcomed Sakhalin compatriots at the International Passenger Terminal. Choi Young-han, deputy director of the OKA, waited for the boat, entered the arrival hall and appeared at the welcoming ceremony, pushing the wheelchair carrying Hwang Sun-nam.

“I don’t know how far away your hometown must have felt and how excited you must have been while you were spending 24 hours on a passenger ship due to traffic congestion,” Choi said in his welcome speech. “So that you don’t feel lonely, from now on, Korea will always be by your side.”

Hwang was thrilled, saying, “When I received the warm welcome, I felt the sadness of living as a forgotten person for all these years disappearing like the melting snow. I feel like I have truly returned to my motherland.”

Park Jong-sul, secretary general of the Korean Red Cross, and Lee Jae-young, director of the East Sea Regional Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Office, attended the welcome event of the OKA, held for the first time since the agency’s launch last year.


Sakhalin compatriots suffered as they were forcibly mobilized during the Japanese colonial period, and even after liberation in 1945, the Cold War system continued, and they were unable to return to their homeland. They were able to visit Korea thanks to the



A welcoming ceremony for Sakhalin compatriots is held at Donghae Port International Passenger Terminal on May 11, with Choi Young-han (L), deputy director of the OKA, and Hwang Sun-nam (C), the oldest permanent returnee, in attendance.

establishment of diplomatic ties with Russia in 1991.

In accordance with the Special Act on Support for Sakhalin Compatriots, the OKA is implementing a project to support the permanent return and domestic settlement of those who immigrated or were born in Sakhalin before Aug. 15, 1945, as well as their accompanying families. Korean compatriots who return to Korea permanently receive support for transportation, initial settlement fees, housing and living facility expenses, and rental housing.

The OKA helps compatriots settle down in Korea stably through collaborations with related organizations, such as the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Korean Red Cross, and the Korea Land and Housing Corp. while providing support for second- and third-generation Sakhalin Koreans to visit their homeland and permanent residence. Various projects, such as “legal support for Sakhalin compatriots returning home,” are also being promoted. 

Launch of Koryo-in Global Network to create foundation for communication between Koryo people at home and abroad

Chae Ye-jin, chairperson of Media People Cooperative, named as first chairperson



Participants at the launch ceremony of the Koryo-in Global Network

The Koryo-in Global Network (KGN), an organization of the Koryo diaspora in Korea, has been launched to create a platform for communication between the Koryo people in Korea and abroad and to help them cooperate with each other in various fields.

KGN held a launching ceremony on April 27 at the Mozart Hall of the President Hotel in Jung-gu, Seoul, and announced its future business direction.

KGN aims to organize and support cultural exchanges and other activities to help Koryo people living in Korea and abroad connect with Korean society and become good members of society.

About 50 Koryo people who are active in various fields participated in KGN. Chae Ye-jin (52), a Korean correspondent for the Korean-language newspaper Koryo Ilbo published in Kazakhstan, has taken on the role of the chairperson of KGN.

Cultural exchange program planned to help Koryo people adjust to Korea

Chairperson Chae, a fourth-generation Koryo compatriot, is a board member of the Choi Jae-hyung Memorial Foundation, a board member of the Hong Bum-do Memorial Foundation and a member of the Jecheon City Overseas Compatriot Policy Advisory

Committee. Until recently, she was the vice president of the Koryo Peoples' Association of Korea.


KGN plans to run cultural exchange programs to spread Korean culture and help the Koryo community adapt. These programs include Korean language education, traditional craft experiences, and lectures on Korean cuisine and music.

KGN will also promote educational support projects to improve the educational level of the Koryo community. It will strive to improve the academic performance of Koryo students by providing academic support, study materials and academic counseling.

Protecting and promoting human rights of Koryo people

KGN will also conduct human rights protection and promotion activities to protect and promote the human rights of Koryo people. It will provide human rights education, investigate and report cases of human rights violations, and provide legal counseling services.

In addition, the organization will work to expand the network of Koryo people at home and abroad and promote friendly relations between Korea and other countries through international projects. Through cultural exchanges, historical tours, international cooperation projects and participation in international events, the organization aims to contribute to raising the profile of the Korean people.

“We plan to provide education and resettlement support for Koryo people returning to their homeland and cooperate with Koryo organizations in the (Commonwealth of Independent States) region,” a KGN official said. 

Koreans in Africa and Middle East restart ‘Fountain of Peace’ project after six years

‘Actively Promote Korea-Africa Summit’ at General Federation of Africa and Middle East Korean Associations - World Korean Business Convention Executive Meeting

After a six-year hiatus, the Fountain of Peace program, an initiative organized by Korean compatriots living in Africa and the Middle East, will resume. The project aims to build facilities to provide clean water to people in remote areas of Africa.

The General Federation of African & Middle Eastern Korean Associations and the Africa and Middle East Korean Business Convention (Chairman Kim Jum-bae) held an executive meeting on May 2-3 at JNJ Resort in Jangheung County, South Jeolla Province, and decided to restart the project.

The executive meeting was attended by Chairman Kim, Secretary-General Jeon Sang-ho (president of the Korean Association of Syria), Shim Hyun-seop (former president of the Korean Association of Kuwait), Jeong Hae-kwon (former president of the Korean Association of Durban, South Africa), Choi Kyung-yeol (former president of the Korean Association of Madagascar) and Kim Bu-jin (former president of the Korean Association of Nigeria).

Reopening ceremony planned for December

“We agreed to make efforts to improve the quality of life of Africans by providing clean water, which is the source of life,” said Kim Jum-bae, chairman of the Africa and Middle East Korean Business Convention. “We will receive applications from Korean organizations in poor areas and decide on the location.”

The General Federation of African & Middle Eastern Korean Associations and the Africa and Middle East Korean Business Convention will provide a summary of the meeting and announce it to members in June, and after a review process, select a country for the project. The fountain launch ceremony is planned for December.

The organizations launched the Fountain of Peace project with the Tanzania Korean Association in December 2017 and presented springs to two elementary schools in Tanzania in February 2018.

Since then, the organization has continued to dig wells in Malawi




The annual general meeting of the General Federation of African & Middle Eastern Korean Associations and the Africa and Middle East Korean Business Convention takes place in Bangkok, Thailand, in March.

and South Africa, helping to solve drinking water shortages in 20 communities in eight countries as of 2018. It was introduced as an example of the best management practices of Korean organizations at the World Congress of Korean Association Presidents in October 2018.

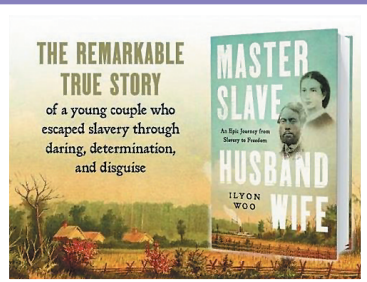
Raising awareness about Africa

The program, however, was suspended for a while due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The General Federation of African & Middle Eastern Korean Associations and the Africa and Middle East Korean Business Convention have also decided to actively promote the success of the first-ever Korea-Africa Summit, which will be held in Seoul in June.

“We hope that it will be a successful meeting that can serve as an opportunity to raise awareness of Africa in Korea,” Chairman Kim Jum-bae said. “Compatriots will work harder to promote Korea, and those who are staying in Korea during the summit are planning to greet heads of state and government at the airport when they visit Korea.” 

GLOBAL KOREAN



The Pulitzer Prize-winning author Woo Il-yeon (top) and the front cover of her novel "Master Slave Husband Wife" (Provided by Pulitzer Prize selection committee)



Writer Woo Il-yeon becomes first Korean American to win Pulitzer Prize, America's most prestigious award for books Nonfiction 'Master Slave Husband Wife'; joint winner in biography category

A nonfiction book by a Korean American author won the Pulitzer Prize, the most prestigious award for books in the United States. This is the first time that a person of Korean descent has won the prize in the book category.

The Pulitzer Prize selection committee decided on May 6 that writer Woo Il-yeon, who wrote "Master Slave Husband Wife," would be a co-winner in the biography category.

Woo is a second-generation Korean American. She received her bachelor's degree in humanities from Yale University and her doctorate in English literature from Columbia University. His father is Woo Gyu-seung, an American architect who designed the Whanki Museum and the Asia Culture Center.

"Master Slave Husband Wife" is a nonfiction book about a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Kraft, who were slaves who escaped to the northern states in 1848 by disguising themselves as plantation owners from the southern state of Georgia, where slavery was in full swing.

The wife, Ellen, disguised herself as a young, sickly plantation owner, and the husband, William, disguised himself as Ellen's slave. They then took steamships, carriages and trains to avoid the eyes of slave traders and soldiers and traveled to the North, where slavery had been abolished.

After successfully escaping, the Krafts moved to England and became famous by giving speeches advocating for abolishing slavery and writing a book about their story.

The Pulitzer Prize, established in 1917, selects winners in the media categories, such as news and press photography, and in the arts categories, such as books, drama and music.

Although a Korean American photojournalist has previously won the Pulitzer Prize in the journalism category, this is the first time that a Korean person has won in the book, drama and music categories.

'Surprising sensation' Dr. Chung Chi-hyun, 1.5 generation immigrant, will run again in Bolivian presidential election next year Ranked 3rd in first run in 2019; 'I want to spread the values of liberal democracy'

"I want to spread liberal democratic values to Bolivia. Next year is a meaningful year as it marks the 200th anniversary of Bolivia's independence and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and Bolivia. I plan to run for president next year to make up for my failure in the last election."

Dr. Chung Chi-hyun (54), a 1.5 generation immigrant who became a surprising

sensation by earning approximately 9 percent of the votes in the 2019 Bolivian presidential election, recently met with a reporter at a cafe in Jongno-gu, Seoul, and expressed his aspirations for the presidential election.

Chung first ran in the Bolivian presidential election as a candidate for the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) in 2019 and came in third place, behind President Evo Morales and former President Carlos Mesa.

“Bolivia has 10 opposition parties, excluding the ruling party,” Chung said. “If an equal footing can be formed through the unification of the opposition candidates in next year’s presidential election, there is a good chance of victory. It will be a fight worth fighting because my reputation is growing.”

Chung, who was born in Korea, immigrated to Bolivia in 1982, when he was 12, following his father, Chung Eun-sil, who was a missionary and the president of the Christian University of Bolivia (UCEBOL), and obtained Bolivian citizenship. He currently works as a pastor and surgeon.



Korean deputy mayor in U.K.; local councilor who escorted Charles III’s on his visit to New Malden ‘Current nurse’ Park Ok-jin, deputy mayor of London borough of Kingston

The first Korean vice president has been appointed in a British local government.

Kingston Borough Council, southwest London, held its annual general meeting on the night of May 14 and elected Korean American Park Ok-jin (English name: Elizabeth Park, 57, Liberal Democratic Party) as deputy mayor.

Kingston, one of London’s 32 boroughs, has a population of 170,000 and is home to New Malden, the largest Koreatown in Europe. Rep. Park’s constituency is Old Malden, south of New Malden.

In the United Kingdom, a country with a parliamentary system, mayors are directly elected in some regions, but in many regions, including Kingston, local council members elect the mayor. Some regions do not have a mayor and the executive chairman forms the executive cabinet.

Deputy Mayor Park will serve for one year alongside Rep. Liz Green (Liberal Democratic Party), who was elected mayor. In Kingston, the mayor presides over council meetings, represents the region externally and selects local charities to support based on agreed-upon values.

Deputy Mayor Park moved to the U.K. to study in 1996, received a master’s degree in arts administration and cultural policy from Goldsmiths, University of London, and settled in the U.K. to study nursing. Even after being elected as a district council member, she continues to work as a psychiatric nurse. She also served as a local guide when King Charles III visited the Koreatown in New Malden in November last year. 🇰🇷



Yoo Kang-hee produces podcast in Brazil; ‘efforts to spread Korean identity’

Transformed from craft beer brewery owner to producer of Gyopocast to record Korean immigration history

“We are working on a podcast in the form of a digital archive that documents the history of immigration through interviews with 1.5 and 2nd generation Koreans in Brazil. We are trying to spread the Korean identity among young people.”

Alex Yoo (Korean name: Yoo Kang-hee, 41), the CEO of Soapbox and the host and creator of Gyopocast, which caters to the Korean community in Brazil, told reporters at the Westin Chosun Seoul in Jung-gu, Seoul, on May 3 that he started the program because “I wanted to be closer to my home country.”

He was in South Korea recently to attend the Future Leaders Congress 2024, an event organized by the Overseas Koreans Agency to invite outstanding young talents who will lead the future of their respective Korean communities to develop their Korean identity and enhance their leadership skills.

A journalism and advertising graduate from ESPM University, Yoo ran a craft beer brewery in São Paulo for 16 years. Interacting with people coming and going from the brewery, he first became interested in podcasting when he happened to be featured on a podcast about beer-related topics.

Then COVID-19 hit the world, and Brazil was not spared from the pandemic wave. He started podcasting as a hobby in June 2022, when he was thinking about switching industries, and now he has a studio where he rents out space and produces videos for outside clients.

‘We need to talk to younger generations and older generations and share each other’s experiences’

“Since COVID-19, the level of racism against Asians has increased and the intensity of violence has increased,” Yoo said. “There has been a lot of content about Asian identity in the Anglo-American world. We thought it was necessary to address this topic in Brazil as well.



Alex Yoo, CEO of Soapbox, produces podcasts in São Paulo, Brazil.

“Initially, we envisioned a ‘library’ where locals would share similar experiences, and we recruited and recorded the guests according to the criteria of capturing inspiring stories for the next generation. Since the program went live, many listeners have suggested a wide range of guests.”

Originally launched on Spotify, the world’s largest music platform, Gyopocast is now available on YouTube. As of 2023, there are about 50,000 Koreans living in Brazil. There are still many Koreans who are unaware of the existence of Gyopocast, and the organization plans to actively promote it in the future.

“The history of Korean immigration to Brazil began in December 1962. In the first 60 years of immigration, the goal of our grandparents and parents was to survive,” Yoo said. “There is a need for the younger generation to talk to the older generation and share their experiences.”

“I hope people will continue to relate to the stories and life trajectories of the Koreans who appear on the podcast,” he said. “I think we can learn more wonderful life lessons by adding our own stories. I hope Gyopocast can play a supportive role behind the scenes.” 🇰🇷

Korean American detective at LAPD; ‘I work without forgetting that I’m doing it for my family’

Choi Jong-min is active in Korean community, including Korean American Police Officers Association

“During my training and graduation from the police academy, one of my senior colleagues advised me, ‘When your family asks the police for help, think about what police officer you would want to come.’ I have never forgotten my initial goal of protecting my family.”

Detective Justin Choi (Korean name: Choi Jong-min, 31) of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), a Korean American from Los Angeles, told reporters on May 1 at the Westin Chosun Seoul in Jung-gu, Seoul, that he hopes to make a better society by contributing his small part.

Choi recently traveled to South Korea to attend the 2024 Future Leaders’ Conference, an event organized by the Overseas Koreans Agency to invite outstanding young talents who will lead the future of Korean communities in their respective countries to develop their Korean identity and leadership skills.

He became an LAPD officer in 2016 after majoring in business administration at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Of the approximately 10,000 members of the police force, about 300 are Korean. After doing general police work, such as patrols, he transferred departments in July last year to homicide, in which he investigates cases that include shootings, kidnappings, stalking, terrorist threats, hate crimes and attempted murders.

Lived in Korea for four years as child with U.S. military mom; ‘I’m proud to be Korean’

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as hate crimes against Asians increased, Choi worked to educate Korean Americans and others on how to protect themselves from harm and how to respond in the event of an incident.

“Sometimes I wonder if my hard work is really effective when I face situations that don’t change,” Choi said, “but I try not to give up because I want to be the police officer who is there when someone needs my help.”



Justin Choi, an investigator with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), poses for a photo after speaking to reporters at the Westin Chosun Seoul in Jung-gu, Seoul, on May 1.

Although he is American, he said he has never forgotten his Korean background. He lived in South Korea for four years with his mother, who was transferred to Yongsan U.S. Army Base when he was 4 years old, and learned both English and Korean at an international school.

“After I graduated from high school in the United States, I traveled to Korea every year,” Choi said. “It’s worthwhile to see traditional Korean architecture and learn about Korean history. I am proud to be Korean.”

“I became more interested in my Korean identity and Korean culture, and I joined the conference to better understand the current state of Korea,” he said. “I want to share my thoughts and interact with Korean Americans from all over the world and learn about the differences between different cultures and traditions.” [\[장\]](#)



Korean War hero honored by Korean American's military hymn; memorial service for late Col. Puckett on Capitol Hill

First Korean War veteran to be laid to rest in U.S. Capitol; 'example of courage and honor'

"His courage and self-sacrifice will be a lasting legacy in the hearts and minds of future generations of soldiers." (Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Republican)

A memorial service for the late U.S. Army Col. Ralph Puckett, who served in the Korean War and received the highest decorations from both the United States and South Korea, was held April 29 in the U.S. Capitol.

Leaders from both sides of the aisle paid tribute to the late colonel's heroic actions in defense of freedom and to honor America's Korean War veterans.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Senate Republican Leader McConnell, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota) and Korean American Rep. Marilyn Strickland (D-Washington) were joined by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley.

After an urn holding Puckett's ashes and the American flag were placed in the center of the Rotunda, the round hole at the center of the Capitol's second floor, the memorial service began with a prayer by Rev. Margaret Kibben of the U.S. House of Representatives. McConnell and Johnson followed with eulogies. Staff Sgt. Esther Kang of the U.S. Army Band volunteered to sing.

"They were outnumbered 10 to 1," McConnell said, referring to the Battle for Hill 205, in which the late colonel fought in the Korean War as the commander of the 8th Ranger Company. "It's hard to imagine a more perfect embodiment of the motto 'Rangers lead the way' (in these circumstances)," he said. "He probably prayed for strength, resolve and courage to complete the mission and lead his men honorably, and his prayers were answered."

"He was there for his country and his fellow soldiers on that cold day in November of 1950," Johnson said, noting that Colonel Puckett's motto was "Be there," and that "No matter what the

situation, no matter how difficult it was, no matter how cold and rainy it was, no matter if someone was shooting at (his) chest, no matter if there was no food, he was there for his country and his fellow soldiers.”

Following the eulogy, tributes and condolences were offered by Senate and House leadership, Austin and others. Kang of the U.S. Army Band, Pershing’s Own, sang the hymn “In the Garden” to honor his memory. After the memorial service concluded with a benediction by Rev. Kibben, the public was allowed to pay their respects before the urn was taken out of the Capitol at 6 p.m. that day.

“I volunteered when I heard that our band was doing a memorial service,” Kang, who was born in Seoul, told reporters after the service.

President Biden awarded Medal of Honor to Col. Puckett while he was still alive

Lying in State in Congress is the highest honor reserved for the death of a former or current U.S. president, senator or representative who has made a significant contribution to the country. The late colonel is the only Korean War veteran to have been honored in the U.S. Capitol.

Prior to the congressional tribute, the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation (KWVMF) held a wreath-laying ceremony at the Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Georgia) and others paid their respects at the event, which was held in conjunction with the Congressional Medal of Honor Association.

President Yoon also awards colonel the Taegeuk Order of Military Merit, the nation’s highest military honor

Col. Puckett was the last surviving recipient of the Medal of Honor for his service in the Korean War and passed away on April 8 at his home in Columbus, Georgia. He was appointed commander of the 8th Ranger Company, which was formed in Japan at the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, and subsequently deployed.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur executed the Incheon landing in September of that year, and the 8th Ranger Company, which the late colonel led, was credited with leading the offensive on North Korea, helping to drive the North Korean Army back north of the 38th parallel. In particular, in November 1950, he defended the 205th Ranger Battalion, a strategic position north of the Chongchon River, against the Chinese Communist Army through six operations, suffering at least three serious wounds in the process.

He was awarded the U.S. Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest military decoration, by President Joe Biden in 2021. The ceremony was attended by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who was visiting the United States at the time. He also received the Taegeuk Order of Military Merit, the country’s highest military honor, from South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol during his state visit to the United States in April 2023. 🇺🇸🇰🇷

Kang Byung-cheol,

Washington correspondent for Yonhap News Agency



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1 U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson delivers a tribute during a ceremony to pay tribute to the late U.S. Army Reserve Col. Ralph Puckett at the Central Hall of the U.S. Capitol on April 29.

2 A wreath-laying ceremony was held on April 29 at the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the late U.S. Army Reserve Col. Ralph Puckett.

3 U.S. President Joe Biden awards the Medal of Honor, America’s highest military distinction, to Col. Ralph Puckett, a Korean War veteran, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., on May 2021.

4 President Yoon Suk Yeol awards the Taegeuk Order of Military Merit to retired U.S. Army Col. Ralph Puckett on April 25, 2023, during a state visit to the United States.

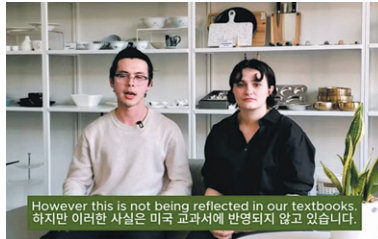
VANK promotes history of Korea's development and overseas Koreans' contributions to home country in English and Japanese

Posted a promotional video on YouTube for textbook writers around the world

VANK, a cyber diplomatic mission, launched a promotional campaign by producing videos in English and Japanese that promote Korea's political and economic development and the contributions of the 7 million overseas Koreans to their home country. The video was added to the mission's site in English, which was established for the project to promote the inclusion of Korea's history of development in textbooks around the world.

VANK will first promote the video to textbook publishers and foreign teachers around the world and seek to form international public opinion so that this content can be included in local textbooks.

In 1960, Korea had a per capita income of only \$67, but in 2019, it grew to a per capita income of \$30,000, the first for a country that



American youth active in VANK produce videos on Korea's development status and introduce them on YouTube.

experienced colonialism.

It grew into the world's 10th-largest economy in 2023, highlighting the fact that it is the only country among the 80 countries that achieved independence after World War II to achieve both economic growth and political democracy to the level of the European Union (EU).

"The unprecedented political and economic development achieved through the passion, effort and sacrifice of Koreans has world historical significance," a VANK official said. "It is material that can be effectively included in textbooks in countries that currently do not properly introduce Korea and the Korean Wave. It will help promote awareness of Korea."

In addition, two young Americans working at VANK also produced a video promoting Korea's development for textbook publishers around the world and introduced it on YouTube.

Bridge built to commemorate Sgt. Moon Jae-sik, 1.5 generation Korean American who died in Iraq

Rep. Hogan proposes bill to name bridge after Sgt. Moon, working to pass it in state Senate, House of Representatives

A bridge was named after a 1.5 generation Korean who died while serving in Iraq in 2006. According to the Korean community, the Middletown Bridge near Middletown Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, U.S., recently received its official name, Sergeant Moon Jae-sik Memorial Bridge.

The naming ceremony to honor the late Sgt. Jay Moon (Korean name: Moon Jae-sik, 21 years old at time of death) was held on May 19. About 100 people attended, including bereaved family members, such as his father, Moon Young-hwan (72); politicians, including Pennsylvania Rep. Joe Hogan; and Philadelphia Korean Association President Kim Seong-joong.

The project of naming this bridge was promoted with the active help of Rep. Hogan, who proposed a bill to name a bridge after Sgt.



Attendees of the naming ceremony for the Sergeant Moon Jae-sik Memorial Bridge

Moon and worked to pass it in Pennsylvania's Senate and House of Representatives. Born in 1985 in Korea, Moon immigrated to the U.S. at a young age with his family, including his father, Moon Young-hwan, a basketball player.

He grew up in Middletown Township and enlisted in the U.S. Army immediately after graduating from high school. He was initially assigned to the U.S. 2nd Division and served near the Demilitarized Zone in Korea. He then took part in the Iraq War when the 2nd Division moved to Iraq.

He returned after being deployed once in 2005 and was redispached in 2006. He was killed on Dec. 25 of that year when a land mine buried in the road exploded while he was on patrol duty in a car in Baghdad.

‘Korean school teachers are volunteers who instill Korean identity’

Lee Sook-hyang, president of Association of Korean Language School Principals in Germany,
‘Nurturing global citizens with a sense of roots’

Lee Sook-hyang, president of the Association of Korean Language School Principals in Germany, who recently visited Korea to sign a globalization agreement for K-Origami with the Paper Culture Foundation, met with a reporter on May 8 and said: “All Korean school teachers are volunteers who are dedicated with a sense of duty to instill the identity of the Korean people. The role of the Korean language school is to help the next generation of Koreans, who are the leaders of tomorrow, have a connection to their home country and play an active role in the local mainstream society.”

There are about 200 teachers working at 33 Korean schools across Germany, and about 3,500 students are enrolled. Among these, President Lee, who is also the principal of a Korean language school in Essen, where many Koreans live, said: “Recently, due to the influence of the Korean Wave, not only children and parents from multicultural families but also local students and adults are visiting the school. The next generation is becoming Korean. It is as important to have a sense of global citizenship that is independent

of country of origin, race, etc., as it is to have a sense of one’s roots.”

“I am well aware of the difficult situation of Korean language schools and recognize their importance, so I hope that systematic support will increase,” Lee said, welcoming the establishment of the Overseas Koreans Agency. “It would be good if each country’s embassy had a dedicated officer in charge of Korean language schools or education for overseas Koreans.”

He also advised, “As support for Korean language schools is given by various ministries, including the OKA, confusion arises in the field. There is a need to integrate them into one place and establish a system.”

Lee studied abroad in Germany in 1989 and graduated from the Technical University of Berlin. He has lived there for 36 years and has been serving as a teacher and principal of a Korean language school since 2011.



Lee Sook-hyang, president of the Association of Korean Language School Principals in Germany

LA Korean Chamber of Commerce visits Korea and China; discussion on trade and investment cooperation measures

Kim Bong-hyun, chairman of the chamber, signed an MOU with Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry and North Gyeongsang Province

The Los Angeles Korean Chamber of Commerce, a representative Korean business organization in the United States, formed a delegation of 17 people that visited Korea and China in mid-May to discuss measures regarding trade and investment cooperation.

The delegation consisted of Chairman Kim Bong-hyun and Vice Presidents Kim Kyung-hyun, Kim Jae-hang and Kim Ji-na and visited Shanghai and Hangzhou, China, from May 12 to 15. During this period, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed with the East China Federation of Korean Chambers of Commerce in China, the Korean Association of Korean Chambers of Commerce in Hangzhou and the Shanghai branch of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations (World-OKTA). The delegation then stayed in Korea from May 16-20 and signed an MOU with the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry and North

Gyeongsang Province.

In particular, the delegate looks forward to working with the Korea Chamber for the advancement of Korean companies into the U.S. and the business expansion of Korean companies in LA and discussed building networks between the political and business communities. During the visit to Korea, the delegation also visited the Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business, and the Korea National University of Transportation.

“When we want to enter the United States from Korea or China, we have formed a mission with the aim of finding a way to further enhance the status of Koreans and develop each other using the network of LA Hansang,” Chairman Kim Bong-hyun said.



Kim Bong-hyun, chairman of the Los Angeles Korean Chamber of Commerce

‘The place where Buddha resides’; Yeongchuk Mountain and Tongdo Temple

Enshrining Buddha’s relics; UNESCO-designated World Cultural Heritage

Yeongchuk Mountain is one of the main peaks of the Yeongnam Alps, a group of mountains that rise powerfully near the border of North and South Gyeongsang provinces, while the Taebaek Mountains, the spine of the Korean Peninsula, extend to the south.

The name comes from the similarity in shape to Yeongchuk Mountain in India, where Sakyamuni preached. At the southern foot of Yeongchuk Mountain, there is Tongdo Temple, which enshrines the relics of Sakyamuni Buddha. The places where Buddha and his teachings are located are Yeongchuk Mountain and Tongdo Temple.

In early March, when spring rain fell, snow fell at the summit of the Yeongnam Alps. Because it was an alpine mountain over 1,000 meters above sea level, it snowed rather than rained. Not only did Gaji Mountain (1,241 m), the center of the Yeongnam Alps, but also the ridge of Yeongchuk Mountain, 1,081 m above sea level, have snow piled up so high that your ankles sank into the whiteness.

The Yeongnam Alps are a group of alpine mountains over 1,000 m above sea level, gathered in the border areas of Yangsan, Ulsan, Miryang, Cheongdo and Gyeongju. The name was given because the beautiful mountain scenery is comparable to that of the European Alps. In addition to Yeongchuk Mountain and Gaji Mountain, it includes Cheonhwang Mountain (1,189 m), Jaeyak Mountain (1,119 m), Sinbul Mountain (1,159 m), Goheon Mountain (1,034 m), Ganwol Mountain (1,069 m), Unmun Mountain (1,188 m) and Munbok Mountain (1,014 m).

Yeongnam Alps with heavy snow in March

Yeongchuk Mountain, which overlooks the Nakdong River and the East Sea, is famous for its spectacular rocks, old pine trees and silver grass fields. From the seventh ridge, large rocks rise up like a fortress.

If you go 1.6 kilometers further from Hambakdeung, you will reach the summit of Yeongchuk Mountain. At the summit, the ridge leading to Sinbul Mountain, Ganwoljae Mountain and Ganwol Mountain spreads out widely, attracting mountain climbers who enjoy hiking ridges. In particular, the silver grass fields on the mountain plateau that extend from the summit of Yeongchuk



Mountain to Ganwoljae create an exotic atmosphere, proving that the nickname Alps is not an illusion.

There is no Buddha statue in the main hall of Tongdo Temple, which is considered one of the three largest temples in Korea, along with Haein Temple and Songgwang Temple. Why is this? This is because it enshrines the relics of Sakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha statue symbolizes Buddha. Since the relics of Sakyamuni are enshrined, there is no need to install Buddha symbols.

These relics are part of the sacred relics, including Buddha’s lyrics, skull relics, finger bone relics and 100 body relics, which are said to have been received by Master Jajang of the Silla Dynasty after personally encountering Manju Bodhisattva while studying Buddhism in Jangan, the capital of the Tang Dynasty.

Jajang, who was born into a prestigious family but turned away from success and became a monk to practice the Way, founded Tongdo Temple in 646 to establish Buddhist precepts, built the Geumgang Stairs, and enshrined the Buddha’s relics and lyrics on those stairs.

In Buddhism, the stairs are where ordination, the most important ritual in the process of becoming a monk, takes place. “Geumgang” means diamond. The Geumgang Staircase contains the meaning of becoming a true monk by receiving the precepts under the watchful eye of Buddha and keeping the precepts as firm as a diamond.



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There is a stone bell-shaped stupa in the middle of the Geumgang Stairs. The Daeung Hall, which is attached to the Geumgang Stairs, is a unique building with all four sides facing the front. The Jeokmyeolbogung plaque is attached to the side of the Geumgang Stairs, and the Daeung, Geumgang Stairs and Daebanggwang plaques are hung in order in a clockwise direction.

Tongdo Temple's Geumgang Stairs, where illegality will continue forever

Inside the main hall, there is a large glass window facing the Geumgang Stairs so that visitors can view the stupa and worship. The Buddhist altar without a Buddha statue is gorgeous and majestic. Among the four plaques, the Geumgang Stairs and Jeokmyeolbogung are known to be handwritten by Heungseon Daewongun. For preservation purposes, the stupa is open for three hours on the first to third days of the lunar calendar, the first full moon, Ksitigarbha Day (18th day of the lunar calendar) and Avalokitesvara Day (24th day of the lunar calendar).

Tongdo Temple's position as the best temple in Korea is largely due to the enshrining of Buddha's relics, the most precious of

Buddhist worship objects. The Diamond Staircase, where part of Sakyamuni's body resides, symbolizes the Buddha's teachings that will never disappear.

Tongdo Temple, where illegal activities have continued for nearly 1,400 years from the Silla period to the present, is a World Cultural Heritage site designated by UNESCO.

The red Jajangmae is an old tree that is close to 400 years old. In the mid-1600s, when the Tongdo Temple, which burned down during the Japanese invasions of Korea, was being rebuilt, it suddenly bloomed under Yeonggak, which houses the encampments of previous patriarchs and continues to bloom every year in early spring.

Only temple memorial facility in the country The people's pain is felt at every twist and turn of history, including the Japanese invasion of Korea.

Naturally, Tongdo Temple, which has a long history, has many cultural assets. Tongdo Temple houses 27 nationally designated cultural assets and 62 provincially designated cultural assets, including the national treasures of the Geumgang Stairs and Daeung Hall, as well as 26 other treasures.

The space of Tongdo Temple has shared the pain of the people throughout the ups and downs of history, including the Japanese invasions of Korea, the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. During the Korean War, it was used as a hospital to treat injured Korean soldiers. Tongdo Temple was officially recognized as a memorial facility as a branch of the 31st Army Hospital in 2021. It shows a cross section of the patriotic Buddhism that Korean Buddhism has maintained.

Today, there is a constant flow of asceticism and worship at the shrine, where sick soldiers left records of hope 70 years ago. 🙏



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1 A night view of Daeung Hall 2 A night view of Tongdo Temple 3 The Geumgang Stairs 4 Jajangmae and Five-Hyangmae

OKA Commissioner Lee visits Chinese compatriots

Meets with compatriots and visits Koreatown to hear their difficulties; introduces OKA's main policies

Lee Key-cheol, the commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, visited Beijing from May 7 to 9 for the first time since the launch of the OKA on June 5, 2023, to discuss pending issues at the World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) and meet with compatriots in various fields, including the business community, to discuss difficulties.

On the first day of his visit, Lee and fellow businessmen shared their opinions on major issues related to the local economic situation and corporate management.

The next day, the 47th Steering Committee of the WKBC was held to review the direction of this year's convention, which will be held in Jeonju, North Jeolla Province, in October, and to encourage the participation of businesspeople from all over the world.

A briefing session for the Overseas Koreans Business Advisory Group (OK Biz) was then held to find Korean businessmen who would participate as buyers and meeting partners at the WKBC and various business exhibitions. In the afternoon of the same day, the commissioner visited compatriots' businesses in downtown Beijing and Wangjing Koreatown to listen to the various opinions of our compatriots.

In addition, about 30 compatriots, including Korean associations, multicultural families, Korean language school officials and



OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol (front row, C) takes a photo with attendees at the 47th Steering Committee Meeting of the WKBC at the Beijing Grand Metro Park Hotel on May 8.

international students were invited to a dinner meeting, where they shared current issues in the compatriot community and were presented with explanations of major policies of the OKA, such as "Korea's history of development promotion."

"Through various events in Beijing, we will strengthen the network of overseas Koreans in China and their connections with their home countries and will serve as an opportunity for mutually beneficial growth between Koreans living in China and Korea," Lee said.

2024 History, Culture, Development Experience for Overseas Korean Scholarship Students held

The Overseas Korean Cooperation Center (Director Kim Young-geun), a public institution under the Overseas Koreans Agency, held the 2024 History, Culture and Development Experience for Overseas Korean Scholarship Students on May 5 and 6.

This program was designed to foster the identities of overseas Korean scholarship students studying at domestic universities (graduate schools) and help them grow into leaders of their home country and Korean community. About 110 scholarship students from 30 countries participated in the event. They toured the Baekje cultural area in Gongju, South Chungcheong Province, and Iksan and Gunsan, North Jeolla Province.



Scholarship students visit the Mireuk Temple in Iksan.

OKA Commissioner Lee requests cooperation for policies for overseas Koreans at luncheon with overseas diplomatic leaders

Lee Key-cheol, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, held a luncheon meeting with leaders of overseas diplomatic missions at the Lotte Hotel in Jung-gu, Seoul, on April 26 and requested cooperation regarding policies for overseas Koreans. About 180 leaders, including ambassadors, consuls general and heads of missions attended the meeting. These leaders were gathered in Korea to attend another meeting of heads of diplomatic missions abroad.

Lee asked the leaders of diplomatic missions abroad to actively cooperate in improving the consular civil service office, strengthening the management of support funds for compatriot organizations, promoting the policies of the Korean government and the OKA, and strengthening activities centered on the livelihoods of the overseas Korean community.

In particular, he introduced this year's core project of the OKA,



OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol explains overseas Korean policies at a luncheon for leaders of diplomatic missions abroad.

education on Korea's history of development and inclusion of overseas textbooks, and emphasized, "It is a project that simultaneously achieves the goal of cultivating the identities of the next generation of Koreans and improving the status of Koreans in their country of residence."

The leaders proposed distributing standard articles that can be commonly used by Korean associations in each country, dispatching Korean language teachers to Korean schools in non-English-speaking areas that lack Korean teachers, strengthening support for adoptees, distributing unmanned civil complaint certificate issuance machines to diplomatic missions abroad, establishing a system for distributing educational materials and teaching materials for Korean language schools, and officially recognizing the working experience of Korean language school teachers.

Overseas Koreans Agency's Book Recommendations



'Inconvenient Convenience Store'

Kim Ho-yeon / Publisher: Namu Bench

Set in a small convenience store on the corner of an alley in Cheongpa-dong, Seoul, "Inconvenient Convenience Store" is a warm and humorous look into the lives of our neighbors living through difficult times.

Published by Namu Bench, this is the fifth full-length novel by Kim Ho-yeon, who made her debut in 2013 with "The Mangwon-dong Brothers," the winner of the World Literature Prize for Excellence, and has since created unique works by switching between lighthearted works that depict everyday reality with witty and thriller genres that explore human desires with ingenious imagination.

Just as she used the experiential geography of Mangwon-dong in "The Mangwon-dong Brothers" to create delightful fun and empathy, she vividly captures the empathy of Cheongpa-dong, an old neighborhood in Seoul, to create another exciting



"neighborhood story."

It has sold over 1.5 million copies, has been on the top 10 bestseller lists of major bookstores for 80 consecutive weeks, has been exported to 22 countries around the world, was selected as the book of the year in 73 cities nationwide and was the best-selling book on Kyobo Bookstore and Yes24 in 2022. It is a representative work of K-healing fiction that has captivated the world beyond Korea and is a phenomenal million-seller created by readers' choice and word of mouth.



Why Korean is important for cultivating the next generation of Korean identity

As a Korean American who grew up in four different countries -- the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Indonesia and the United States -- I have always struggled with my identity. When someone would ask me, "Where are you from?" I would pause and hesitate to answer the question. While I can speak English, Korean and Spanish, I am not a native speaker of any of these languages. I further pondered: Who am I?

Identities are never fixed but constantly evolving. Therefore, it is important to foster a greater sense of Korean identity in younger generations of overseas Koreans dispersed across the globe. My own identity was in constant flux as I saw myself not relating to either the second-generation Korean Americans or the first-generation Koreans. I was in an interstitial space where I was faced with an identity crisis. As I grew older, I realized that I was associating myself more with the Korean community because that's where I found my comfort zone. For me, strengthening one's Korean identity requires learning the Korean language, which further allows one to immerse themselves in Korean history and culture. If you admire another culture and want to establish a deep connection, the first step is to learn its language. Language and identity are closely intertwined with one another. Just like the food that we eat is connected to our identity, language helps us assert our identity.


I encounter many second-generation Koreans in the United States who do not feel the need to learn the Korean language; they consider themselves fully acclimated to the mainstream culture and society where they reside. Indeed, many overseas Koreans speak English and other languages fluently, but as ethnic Koreans living abroad, we come to a self-reckoning moment where we question our identity or what others label as an identity crisis. I came to the realization that my roots in Korea continue to shape my identity. While I consider myself acculturated, I am continuously perceived as a perpetual foreigner by others because of my Korean ethnicity. To



Benjamin Han,
associate professor at University of Georgia
in U.S.

embrace and foster our identity as Koreans is to understand the crucial role that language plays in our identity formation. When I reflect on my experiences, the fact that I continue to improve my Korean has become a great asset to me as a global citizen, enabling me to do research on Korean media and culture, and, more importantly, it has offered me an opportunity to network and collaborate with other overseas Koreans on meaningful projects to advance Korean studies. Therefore, sensing an urgency that the Korean language can be one's important asset will expand into other areas of interest, such as history, media and culture. With the rise of Korea as a technologically and economically

advanced nation and the globalization of Korean popular culture instilling a greater sense of pride in our heritage as ethnic Koreans, we need not only to embrace our hyphenated identities but also the significance of mastering the Korean language.

Additionally, the tendency to privilege Korean diasporic communities in North America must be avoided to develop a more expansive understanding of the global Korean diaspora that is inclusive of other regions, such as the Caribbean and Latin America. Specifically, we need to consider how hybrid subjectivities of mixed-raced diasporic individuals are an important part of our Korean ethnic consciousness. The perception of the Korean diaspora must also become more progressive, not only seeing them as Westernized Koreans who have lost touch with their homeland. We must embrace them and foster deeper conversations and collaborations that would strengthen our ethnic ties as members of the global Korean community. We can work together based on each other's talents to develop a stronger collective identity and subjectivity as Koreans. Then, we can make meaningful contributions to our communities and instill a stronger sense of collective Korean identity and consciousness among younger generations of Koreans dispersed across the globe. 

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

**OKA's
Upcoming
Events**

- 2024 Future Leaders' Conference (April 30-May 3)
- Overseas Korean Adoptees Gathering (May 21-24)
- OKA 1st Anniversary Celebration (June 5)
- Korean Festival 2024 to be broadcast on KBS to commemorate the 1st anniversary of OKA (June 8)
- Next Generation of Overseas Koreans Motherland Training - Invitational Training for Hangeul School Teachers (July 22-27) / Preliminary Online Training (July 1-19)
- Understanding Korea Course for Koryo Youth and Young Adults (July 22-Aug. 23)

OKA Announcements

Recruitment of Koryo youth and young adults for 'Understanding Korea Course'

Runs from July 22-Aug. 23, experience Korean language, Korean culture and history, visit industrial sites

To commemorate the 160th anniversary of the Koryo migration this year, the Overseas Koreans Agency is organizing an "Understanding Korea Course" for Koryo youths to learn the Korean language and experience Korean culture and history.

The program, which will be held from July 22 to Aug. 23, is open to Korean compatriots living in the Russia-CIS region who have graduated from middle school or higher and are between the ages of 15 and 30. The number of participants will be around 35.

The program will include Korean language classes (organized by proficiency level), Korean culture and history experiences, and industrial site visits. The training will be held at a university campus in Korea. The application period is open until May 29 (KST).

The required documents for application are the participation application form and the agreement to provide and utilize personal information. The optional documents are proof of activities and letters of recommendation (school principal, Korean language school principal, etc.).

Applications can be submitted in either Korean or Russian, and if you are submitting a Russian application, please use a translation program (such as Google Translate) to translate it into Korean and submit it along with your Korean application.

Preference will be given to descendants and descendants of independence heroes and national heroes, those who have never participated in a similar invitation program or visited Korea before, those who have a strong record of service to the Korean community and their country of residence, those who have won awards in their academic fields and activities, and those who have a basic command of Korean.



Successful applicants will be announced on June 17 and will receive 70 percent of the educational expenses, room and board, full travel insurance and airfare (economy class) for the duration of the course (maximum amount of airfare support is 1.3 million won).

For more information, please call 032-585-3176 (OKA, Division for Overseas Koreans in Asia and Russia) or email asru@korea.kr. Applications can be sent to asru@korea.kr.

**OKA
Commissioner's
Activities
in May**

- May 1: Meeting with prime minister regarding Future Leaders' Conference (Prime Minister's Office)
- 2: Meeting with president of World Federation of Korean Sports Associations (OKA headquarters)
- 3: Meeting with president of the World Association of Korean Lawyers (OKA headquarters)
- 7-9: World Korean Business Convention (WKBC) 2024 Steering Committee and Leading CEO Forum (China)
- 21: Opening Ceremony of the Overseas Korean Adoptees Gathering
- 28: MOU and lecture at Kyungin University



700만 재외동포와 대한민국이 하나로 통하는 첫 번째 온라인 세상 코리아넷

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