

# Running fast to realize national task of ‘building global Korean community’

Dedication to role as ‘protective barrier and spokesperson for 7 million overseas Koreans’

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2024 was a year of rapid progress, marking the first anniversary of the launch of the Overseas Koreans Agency. Launched by the Yoon Suk Yeol administration according to the long-cherished wishes of overseas Koreans, the OKA has devoted its heart and soul to implementing the national tasks of “building a global Korean community” and “establishing a global backbone nation.” As the “protective barrier and representative of the 7 million overseas Koreans” that the OKA has been professing to be, there have been many cases of removing thorns from under the fingernails of overseas Koreans, who are precious assets of the Republic of Korea, providing practical assistance, and taking care of the people’s livelihoods and realities on the ground.

In particular, since the inauguration of the second OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk on July 31, the speed of the OKA’s business progress has been accelerated and pushed forward. The Overseas Koreans Policy Academic Forum, held for the first time since the OKA’s launch, was a venue for active discussions on new policy paradigms, with the government, academia and civic groups

coming together. Until now, citizens living overseas have had to travel long distances to overseas diplomatic missions to obtain joint and financial certificates in order to use domestic online services, which was inconvenient. However, a pilot service was launched Nov. 28 to enable overseas citizens to use various domestic online services, such as e-government services, electronic financial services, non-face-to-face medical services, online education services and online shopping, by enabling non-face-to-face identity verification without using a domestic phone or visiting an overseas diplomatic mission in person.

In addition to the 22nd World Korean Business Convention, which achieved the greatest success ever, the 25th World Korean Association Conference, the 18th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony and the 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum were also successfully held.

In the 2024 year-end issue of Window Into Overseas Koreans, we have chosen and will introduce the top 10 news stories from the OKA this year. <Editor’s Note>

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## 1. 22nd World Korean Business Convention; largest number of export contracts ever signed



The 22nd World Korean Business Convention, held at Jeonbuk National University from Oct. 22-24 under the slogan, “Together with overseas Koreans, to the center of global business,” concluded with the largest-ever achievement, including export consultations worth US\$630 million. Hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency (Director Lee Sang-duk) and the Jeonbuk Special Self-Governing Province (Gov. Kim Kwan-young), this convention, which was held for the first time in Jeonju, was attended by 3,500 overseas Korean businesspeople and domestic businesspeople from around the world, and 14,000 people visited the convention’s corporate exhibition hall over the three days. The convention saw a record number of 20,000 export consultation cases, worth \$630 million. In particular, unlike past conventions, this one drew a positive response from participants with new initiatives, such as incorporating Jeonbuk’s traditional culture into the program.

## 2. Completion of 25th World Korean Association Conference and 18th World Korean Day commemoration ceremony

The 25th World Korean Association Conference was held successfully from Oct. 1 to 3 at Lotte Hotel World in Jamsil, Seoul. The opening ceremony was attended by approximately 420 people, including 350 Korean association presidents from 50 countries, executives of the World Assembly of Korean Association and key figures from Korea, including Han Dong-hoon, leader of the People Power Party. Under the slogan of “Proud Korean Compatriots, Korea Moving Together,” the participants listened to expert lectures and forums in a new program titled “My Homeland, My Korea” and a special lecture on the “August 15 Unification Doctrine” presented by Minister of Unification Kim Young-ho in “Dialogue with the Government” on Oct. 2. Before adopting a seven-article resolution, the Korean association presidents divided into 10 regions and held discussions on current issues by region. On Oct. 4, the 18th World Korean Day ceremony was held at the same location, with the attendance of Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, and 350 other key figures from Korea and heads of Korean associations around the world.



## 3. Lee Sang-duk takes office as OKA's second commissioner



Lee Sang-duk took office as the second commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency on July 31. In his inaugural speech, he presented a vision to create an environment in which the Republic of Korea and the overseas Korean community can develop together and contribute to the common prosperity of humanity and the promotion of world peace. To this end, he stated he would always be open and communicate based on empathy with overseas Koreans and the public in Korea. Lee also emphasized, “As the head of the OKA, which the Yoon Suk Yeol government launched in June of last year to fulfill the long-held wish of overseas Koreans, I will devote myself to realizing the national task of ‘building a global Korean community.’ I will strive to expand the overall capabilities of the Korean people by reflecting well the fact that the compatriot community has grown into a valuable overseas resource that can provide mutual assistance with the Republic of Korea.” Since the commissioner took office, the OKA’s projects have been carried out at a faster pace and with greater momentum.

## 4. OKA holds 1st Anniversary Dialogue with compatriots

The Overseas Koreans Agency held an online and offline “Dialogue with overseas compatriots” event in the main auditorium on the fourth floor of the OKA headquarters in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, to mark its first anniversary on June 5. At the event, Commissioner Lee held a Q&A (Overseas Koreans ask questions, OKA Commissioner answers) session and introduced the agency’s achievements so far, such as establishing a legal and institutional foundation for promoting overseas Korean policies, fostering the identity of overseas Koreans and improving domestic awareness, and supporting vulnerable compatriots. In particular, Jeong Tae-sik (91), the oldest Sakhalin compatriot to permanently resettle in Ansan, Gyeonggi Province, in May, drew attention by participating in the event via video with his family. Jeong sang “Sakhalin Arirang,” a song he composed himself. Overseas Koreans, including Kwon Gyeong-seok, president of the National Association of Sakhalin Returnees, and Jeong Yeong-soon, president of the Association of Koryo Saram, shared stories of difficulties they experienced in their daily lives and made various suggestions to the OKA.



## 5. 2024 Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum success



The Overseas Koreans Agency held the Overseas Korean Policy Academic Forum for the first time at the Luna Miele Convention Hall in Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, to collect opinions from various sectors in order to establish comprehensive and systematic policies related to domestic compatriots. Under the theme of “Dialogue with the Government, Academia, and Civic Groups,” 26 speakers and panelists made presentations and held discussions across three sessions. Members of the general public also participated. In addition, all sessions were livestreamed online through the OKA’s YouTube account. In the first session, presentations were given on the theme of “Measures to improve laws and systems for domestic compatriots,” in the second session, on the theme of “Measures to expand domestic awareness of compatriots living in Korea” and in the third session, on the theme of “Policy dialogue for settling domestic compatriots.” Afterward, a free discussion was held on topics that included “Lowering the age for allowing dual citizenship.”

## 6. 2,000 compatriots visit their home country for training, largest number ever

The 2024 Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency opened July 15 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Incheon to provide the next generation of compatriots with an opportunity to experience Korean history and culture and to enhance their identity and pride in their home country by understanding Korea’s development story. This training was conducted over eight sessions, each lasting six nights and seven days. Approximately 1,800 youth and college students from 75 countries participated in the six summer sessions (July-August). In addition, 200 college students and youth participated in the two winter sessions, each with 100 students. In accordance with the First Basic Plan for Overseas Koreans, the OKA designated 2024 as the first year to expand the “Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training,” starting with 2,000 people this year and expanding to 6,000 people by 2028.



## 7. 232 Hangeul school teachers from 46 countries receive training in their home country



The Overseas Koreans Agency held the opening ceremony of the 2024 Hangeul School Teacher Invitational Training at Songdo Convensia in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, on July 22 and held capacity building training until July 27. The training, which was held for six days, was attended by 232 Hangeul school teachers and principals from 46 countries around the world. These Hangeul school teachers, who are leading the way in identity education for the next generation of Koreans around the world, visited their home country to learn Korean language teaching methods and experience and understand Korea’s development. Through online pre-training for three weeks, starting July 1, they intensively learned the Korean language and Korean culture and history teaching methods, and during the training, they learned advanced teaching methods, such as practical exercises. They also participated in a program to directly experience and understand Korea’s development story so that they can teach the next generation of compatriots with pride in Korea.

## 8. 261 Sakhalin compatriots receive permanent return and settlement support



Sixty Sakhalin compatriots set foot in the homeland of their dreams on May 11. The Sakhalin compatriots entered the East Sea Port via sea from Vladivostok, due to flights being cut off due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. They are first- and second-generation compatriots who immigrated to Sakhalin or were born there before Aug. 15, 1945, as well as their accompanying families. The Overseas Koreans Agency selected 261 people as beneficiaries of the 2023 Permanent Return and Settlement Support. Excluding the 16 who entered in April, the remaining 185 people entered the country individually in sequence. The Sakhalin compatriots settled in rental housing in Seoul, Gyeonggi, Incheon, Eumseong and Busan, which were sponsored by the government for the first generation to return permanently. Since the Sakhalin Koreans' permanent repatriation project began in 1992, 5,860 people have returned to their homeland, and there are currently approximately 30,000 Koreans living in Sakhalin.

## 9. 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards selection and announcement

The 2024 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards grand prize winners were Jang Hye-young (United Arab Emirates) for “Mosi” in the Poetry category, Jo Seong-guk (USA) for “I Will Be in Paradise” in the Short Story category and Lee Myeong-ran (New Zealand) for “Linda, the Woman Next Door” in the Essay/Memoir category. Along with the grand prize winners in each category, 13 winners of the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards were selected and announced. The winners will receive a total of 30 million won in prize money and a trophy, and the winning works will be published and distributed in the anthology “Window Into Overseas Korean Literature.” The awards ceremony was held online on Dec. 11. The judges included leading Korean literary figures, including Moon Tae-joon and Jeong Ho-seung (both in the Poetry category), Koo Hyo-seo and Eun Hee-kyung (both in the Short Story category), and Park Sang-woo and Lee Kyung-ja (both in the Essay/Memoir category). The Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, now in their 26th year, are evaluated as having a great influence as a bridge connecting 7 million overseas Koreans and the people of the Republic of Korea.



## 10. 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum held



The 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum, which brought together former and current Korean politicians from around the world, opened Aug. 20 at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeouido, Seoul. This event, held under the slogan, “Our Network is Our Net Asset,” was the largest ever. A total of 96 people from 14 countries participated. Around 50 political figures, including National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik, Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Tae-yeol, Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, People Power Party National Assembly Member Na Kyung-won and President of the Parliamentarian’s Society of the Republic of Korea Jeong Dae-cheol, also attended. For this year’s event, the percentage of participants under the age of 45 exceeded 50 percent, unlike previous years, including Daniel Bae, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Oklahoma (age 29, third term); Ernest Kim, a member of the Youth Council of the Uzbek Liberal Democratic Party (age 27); and Yannick Shetty, the youngest member of the New Austrian Party (NEOS) in Austria’s House of Representatives (age 29). [장]