

## 'We will expand overall capacity of global Korean community'

OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk unveils major work plan for 2025

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced its 2025 work plan on Feb. 11, vowing to strive for a greater Korea by expanding the collective capabilities of the global Korean community.

At a briefing for the new year held at the Overseas Korean Welcome Center in Songdo, Incheon, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk presented five key tasks for the year: ▲ Strengthening overseas Korean identity, ▲ Enhancing protection and support for overseas Koreans, ▲ Establishing a system for strengthening overseas Korean policies, ▲ Revitalizing Korean networks and ▲ Convenient services for overseas Koreans.

"As the Korean Wave, including K-culture, spreads across the globe, it is the purpose and mission of the OKA to expand the future growth engine of Korea by partnering with the Korean diaspora, which is growing economically and rising in political stature around the world," Lee said. To this end, he said, it is important to improve domestic awareness of overseas Koreans, and to strengthen exchanges and cooperation between the diaspora and their homeland to create a win-win situation.

In particular, the OKA will conduct customized support policies based on a survey of the 860,000 returnees who have been in the blind spot of overseas Korean support and stateless Koryo people who have not even been audited since 2007.

The OKA plans to first revise the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans to align the name and functions of its affiliated organization, the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center, with the purpose of its establishment and publish the "Status of Overseas Koreans in 2025" every other year to lay the foundation for policies and projects. To foster the next generation's identity, the budget to support the operation of Korean language schools has been set at 18.6 billion won, a 32 percent increase from 2023, and the number of participants in the Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training has increased from 2,100 last year to 2,600 this year. We will also expand practical support for the vulnerable. We will actively support the permanent return of Sakhalin compatriots and their children and help them stabilize in



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk gives a briefing for the new year on Feb. 11.

their homeland.

To support compatriots living in Korea, we will collaborate with local governments in Korea to support customized projects that take into account regional characteristics. Currently, there are 860,000 Koreans, including Joseonjok and Koryo people, who have returned to Korea, and as the number continues to grow, the OKA will promote "customized adaptation education programs" for youth, adults and the elderly to help them become members of Korean society. This year is the first time since its inception that the OKA has allocated a project budget to support returning Koreans. In addition, to improve awareness among Koreans, the OKA has decided to recognize the contributions of overseas Koreans to their home countries by selecting an Overseas Korean of the Month, starting this year.

This year, the OKA will organize the Future Leaders' Conference in May and the World Korean Association Conference in October to strengthen ties with the homeland. In April, the World Korean Business Convention will be held in Atlanta, the U.S., to help Korean companies expand overseas and build a global Korean economic network. Additionally, an online platform called Hansang Net will provide business matching opportunities all year round for Korean companies seeking to expand overseas. 