

Kim Pyeong-jin, former chairman of the Jeju Development Association in Japan, who helped develop Jeju's tourism industry

The inaugural Overseas Korean of the Month honoree is the late Kim Pyeong-jin (1926-2007), former chairman of the Jeju Development Association in Japan, who was dedicated to the development of Korea and Jeju Island.

Kim was a successful overseas Korean businessman who made significant contributions to the development of his country and his home island of Jeju. Before the 1960s, Jeju was a remote island so cut off from the outside world that there were no regular air routes to or from the mainland, and even passenger ferries were irregular.

It was only with the arrival of Korean Japanese who originally came from Jeju that the island began to change. The Jeju Development Association in Japan was founded in Tokyo in February 1961, and its first president, Kim Pyeong-jin, organized a tour of his hometown with 14 other Jeju people residing in Japan, and the transformation of Jeju into Korea's No. 1 tourist destination began.

Having succeeded in his business in Japan, he used that capital to develop the tourism industry on Jeju Island. In 1963, he established the Jeju Tourist Hotel, the first modern tourist hotel on the island, and began to build a tourism infrastructure in earnest.

A fateful meeting with former President Park Chung-hee

The subsequent opening of the Seogwipo Tourist Hotel and Honeymoon House played a crucial role in Jeju's transformation into an international tourist destination. At the time, Jeju had few facilities to accommodate foreign tourists, and Kim's investments laid the foundation for the island's tourism industry. It could also be said to be the beginning of today's Hometown Love Donation System, in which individuals donate to the development of their hometowns.

Kim was born in 1926 in Hoecheon-dong, Jeju City. He moved to Japan at the age of 15 and made his fortune in ironworks and hotel management.

He was active in social activities, founding and chairing the Jeju Development Association in Japan in 1961, which was before the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea in 1965, and created a boom that awakened the sense of roots among Jeju people and led to local development. He also served as deputy head of the central headquarters of the Korean Residents Union in Japan in the same year, vice chair of the Central Committee of the



The late Kim Pyeong-jin, former president of the Jeju Development Association in Japan

Korea-Japan Friendship Association in 1982, chair of the Korean Federation of Commerce and Industry in Japan, and vice chair of the Korea-Japan Friendship Association in 1985.

He contributed to improving the legal status of Koreans living in Japan and generously supported the development of Jeju Island with an exceptional sense of love for his hometown. In particular, he invested with great affection and love for his hometown.

According to documents from the time, when former President Park Chung-hee was chair of the National Reconstruction Council in 1962, the need for a hotel with modern facilities was raised on Jeju Island, and Kim, a self-made Korean Japanese from Jeju, promised to build a hotel during a fateful meeting with Park.

As a result, on Oct. 13, 1963, Jeju's first private hotel, Jeju Tourist Hotel (now Honey Crown Hotel), opened its doors. Although it was a



The unveiling ceremony of a statue takes place at Jeju Girls' Middle and High School on May 13, 1987, in the photo on the left. On the right, Kim Pyeong-jin delivers a speech expressing his appreciation at the unveiling ceremony.

small 33-room hotel with a total construction cost of 30 million won, it was very significant in Jeju's tourism history. At the time there were only thatched huts and traditional inns on the island, so there was no place for tourists, let alone dignitaries, to stay. Later, the Seogwipo Tourist Hotel was built and merged with the Honeymoon House.

Kim's construction of the Jeju Tourist Hotel is also documented in the book "Love for the Motherland of the Korean People in Japan" by Lee Min-ho, the Seoul bureau chief of the Japan Unification Daily. According to the book, the development of Jeju Island began in earnest when Kim Pyeong-jin and then Gov. Kim Young-kwan made contact.

Jeju's first tourist hotel built in 1964

As a Korean Japanese, Kim Pyeong-jin had a mission to develop his hometown, and as an administrator, he worked to attract foreign investment and develop the region. In April 1962, at the invitation of Gov. Kim, Kim Pyeong-jin organized a tour of his hometown with 14



A meeting is held on the development of Jeju Island with the president of the Institute for Jeju Affairs in 1987.

other Jeju people residing in Japan.

Before traveling to Jeju Island, the group met with Park, chair of the National Reconstruction Commission, in Seoul. During lunch, he explained the reasons for the development of Jeju Island and also made specific requests.

"Shouldn't we build a hotel on Jeju Island to encourage private investment in tourism development?" he asked.

Chairman Kim Pyeong-jin responded, "I'll take charge and attempt this."

In October 1963, the year after his visit to his hometown, Kim opened the Jeju Tourist Hotel, the first hotel on Jeju Island. After 1 1/2 years of construction, it had 33 rooms, a coffee shop, a restaurant and a shopping area on a 2,890-square-meter site, according to a Jeju Shinmun report.

Taking over Jeju Academy for Girls, which was in danger of closure, and restoring it to normalcy

Kim's activities did not stop at the hotel business. He always had a particular interest in the education sector, and as the chair of the Korea Institute in Tokyo, he had felt the importance of everyday education. In 1966, he took over the Jeju Academy for Girls, which was in danger of closing down due to management difficulties, and became its director. After that, he poured his heart into women's education on Jeju Island, including normalizing the Jeju Girls' Middle and High School. Currently, the Jeju Academy for Girls is reportedly being run in an exemplary manner by his eldest son, Chairman Kim Hwa-nam, with the lasting support of his father without any interference from the foundation.

In addition, the deceased became the chair of the Jeju Shinmun (now Jeju Ilbo) in 1973 and continued to make dividend-free investments, such as modernizing facilities, and devoted himself to the development of Jeju's media.

In addition, when he was the head of the Jeju Development Association, he spared no effort to support his hometown of

Hoecheon, providing electricity, building a school and renovating the village center.

In addition, he made great efforts to promote culture and sports by applying for a huge amount of money to build the Jeju Sports Complex and Aehyang Stadium so that it could host the National Junior Sports Festival.

Significant contribution to Jeju's social and economic development

Despite the significant contributions made by Kim Pyeong-jin and Jeju residents of Japan to Jeju's social and economic development, their role in Jeju society has not been properly evaluated. As a result, there have been calls for active research on their role, especially in academia.

At a joint symposium held by Jeju National University's Center for Jeju residents in Japan (Director Lee Chang-ik) and Osaka City University on Feb. 22, 2013, on the topic of Korean businesses and entrepreneurs in Japan and the Korean market, professor emeritus Shinichiro Nagano of Daito Bunka University highlighted the idea of the role of "Jeju people in Japan."

"The role of Jeju people in Japan in the economic and social development of Jeju Island has been very significant since the early days," Nagano said. "In particular, it is necessary to properly evaluate the fact that the two major businesses that drive the island's economy today, tourism and the Jeju tangerine industry, were established by overseas Japanese residents."

Based on official data from the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, Nagano analyzed that the total amount of donations from overseas Jeju people amounted to 28.1 billion won by 2007, and until the 1980s, most of the donations were made by Jeju residents of Japan. He estimated that the actual amount could have been much higher if currency fluctuations and unidentified individual and village-level donations of goods and cash were included.

The man behind Jeju's citrus industry

Kim is also remembered for his efforts to develop Jeju's tangerine industry by distributing new varieties of Jeju tangerine seedlings and



The opening ceremony of the Jeju Tourist Hotel takes place in 1963 (above), in this photo released by the National Archives of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety. Below is the Jeju Tourist Hotel.

inviting Jeju farmers to Japan to learn advanced agricultural techniques.

For his pioneering and distinguished contributions to Jeju's tourism, education and media, Kim was awarded the Order of Culture of the Republic of Korea in 1963, the Order of Civil Merit Peony Medal in 1981 and the Order of Civil Merit Mugunghwa Medal in 1987. In 1998, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Business Administration degree from Jeju National University.

A world-renowned Jeju man who dedicated his life to the development of the island and not just his personal success, Kim passed away on March 29, 2007, at the age of 80. 🇯🇵

A view of the Jeju Academy of Girls, which Kim normalized after taking over as the chair of its board of directors in 1966, when it was in danger of closing down.

