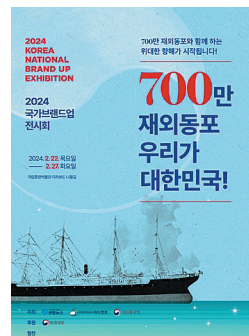




Special Article - OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol visits Koryo-saram in Hambak Village to assess their lives
 Lee reviews lives of compatriots in Philippines and Thailand
 Policy in Focus - OKA significantly increases support for Hangeul schools this year
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Window into Overseas Koreans



For ‘1st Basic Plan on Overseas Koreans Policy’ to succeed

The 22nd Overseas Koreans Policy Committee meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Jan. 3. The meeting was presided over by Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul and was joined by Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Key-cheol; government members from various ministries, such as the Office for Government Policy Coordination, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Unification and the Ministry of Employment and Labor; the head of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center; and civilian members, including overseas Koreans.

At the meeting, the “1st Basic Plan on Overseas Koreans Policy” (2024-2028) was presented. The agenda was a comprehensive master plan that covered all the details related to overseas Koreans and showed a high level of perfection on par with a thesis that fit the foundational purpose of the OKA.

The attending members approved and expressed active support for the government’s master plan for the next five years, including “establishing a system to strengthen policies for overseas Koreans,” “cultivating the identity of overseas Koreans,” “strengthening support for the protection of Koreans befitting national status,” “building a Korean network” and “contributing to the realization of a global hub nation.”

In addition, considering the individuality of the Korean community in neighboring countries, such as the United States, Japan, China and Russia, and the five oceans and the six major continents, the Korean community is urged to identify and collect problems as much as possible and to do its best to secure policy measures, such as organization, manpower and budget to systematically promote mid- to long-term plans. I would like to present what I felt as a former foreign official who attended this meaningful meeting as a civilian member and what needs to be considered.

First of all, Korea must do well. In just 70 years after its liberation on Aug. 15, 1945, the country transformed from an “aid-receiving country” to an “aid-giving country” and played a positive role in the



Kim Gyeong-geun,
civilian member of the Overseas
Koreans Policy Committee, as well
as the former chairman of the
Overseas Koreans Foundation


development of politics, economy, society and culture, as well as diplomacy and security in the international community, including the United Nations.

In order for our compatriots to live proudly as Koreans in unfamiliar and foreign lands, the national power and prestige of Korea must continue to grow. It goes hand in hand with the saying, “If your parents’ family is good, you will receive better treatment at your in-laws’ family.”

Second, policy priorities must be made clear. Each and every policy stipulated in the Framework Act on Overseas Koreans, enacted in 2023 through an agreement between the ruling

and opposition parties, is important, but the time and budget capacity to realize them all are limited. It is necessary to classify the tasks of the above-mentioned master plan into basic, incomplete, ongoing and future types, then create a virtuous cycle of policy establishment, progress and evaluation, and continuously monitor the implementation status.

Third, policies are not completed solely through the government’s will or vision. Rather than viewing overseas Koreans only as policy beneficiaries, we must recognize them as valuable partners in completing policies, actively engage in communication with them and lower the threshold for hearing opinions from the field. In addition, overseas Koreans should also actively participate in communication, such as evaluating the policy for overseas Koreans and suggesting improvement measures.

Fourth, it is important for Koreans in the global era to ultimately contribute to the common prosperity of mankind and the promotion of world peace, beyond the stage of creating an environment in which the Republic of Korea and the networked community of Koreans in various fields, such as Korean associations, schools and businesses, can develop together. To this end, not only must we warmly embrace all compatriots, but we must also seriously pursue efforts to maintain the identity of the next generation of compatriots and improve Koreans’ awareness of overseas compatriots. 





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Publisher: Lee Key-cheol
Publishing Company: Overseas Koreans Agency
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Designed and edited by: Overseas Koreans Agency **Production:** Yonhap News Agency

The Overseas Koreans Agency is an external agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that conducts various policies and projects to support the rights and interests of the overseas Koreans around the world and their integration into mainstream society in their countries of residence.

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

OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol visits Koryo-saram in Hambak Village to assess their lives

‘Actively promoting support for underprivileged compatriots. We will implement policies tailored to Koreans’



1

Lee Key-cheol, the commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, visited Hambak Village in Yeonsu 1-dong, Yeonsu Ward, Incheon, a community of Koryo-saram, on Jan. 30 and assessed the status of people’s living situations. The goal was to establish policies that provide practical help by communicating directly with Korean compatriots and listening to their diverse opinions.

Lee also held a meeting with executives and members of the Association of Koryo-Saram (Chairman Noh Alexander, Korean name Noh Songdal) the same day to check the current status of the village and listen to issues of interest. Officials of the association requested that the OKA take action to promote the rights of Koryo-saram, including improving domestic awareness of Koryo-saram and supporting Korean language education for early settlement.

At this event, the OKA introduced major policies, including a project to include Korea’s political and economic development in foreign textbooks and a project to improve domestic awareness by including the contributions of overseas Koreans to their home country in domestic textbooks.

“The OKA will actively pursue projects to support marginalized Koreans,” Lee said. “We will also establish and implement customized policies for Koryo compatriots.”

He also pledged to actively review support for Korean language education, including strengthening the capabilities of Korean language teachers, so that the Koryo compatriots will not have



2

difficulty communicating in Korean.

The Association of Koryo-Saram, formed in 2018, is composed only of Koryo-saram (with branches established across the country) and is promoting various projects and events targeting Koryo-saram living in Korea. The number of foreign residents in Hambak Village has increased rapidly since 2015, and currently, about 8,000 of the total 12,000 residents, or about 60 percent, are Koryo-saram. [\[Chart\]](#)

1 Lee Key-cheol (6th from L), commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, poses for a photo after a meeting with Koryo compatriots at Hambak Village, Yeonsu 1-dong, Yeonsu Ward, Incheon, on Jan. 30, and a group meeting with Alexander Noh (5th from L), president of the Association of Koryo-Saram, and other attendees.

2 Alexander Noh (3rd from L), chairman of the Association of Koryo-Saram, and his party hold a banner welcoming OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol (4th from L) to Hambak Village.

OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol reviews lives of compatriots in Philippines and Thailand

Explains policies for compatriots, introduces information on Korea's development, requests participation in general elections

Lee Key-cheol, the commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, visited Koreatown in Manila, the Philippines, on Jan. 22 and 23, where he explained the government's policies for Koreans and listened to their difficulties.

During this visit, Lee held a meeting with compatriots to encourage those who are struggling to regain vitality after the COVID-19 pandemic and to come up with a plan to revitalize Koreatowns.

At the meeting held at the Korean Embassy in Manila on Jan. 23, 19 heads of major Korean organizations, including Yoon Man-young, president of the Korean Federation of the Philippines, and Kim Dae-jung, president of the Philippine branch of The Peaceful Unification Advisory Council, attended.

"President Yoon Suk Yeol considers it important for overseas Koreans to successfully settle in their countries of residence," Lee said. "The government will focus on listening to the voices of the Korean community and resolving their difficulties."

He then introduced the significance of the launch of the OKA and its policy to support the development of the identities of the next generation in their countries of residence and their advancement into mainstream society through a project to include important information in foreign textbooks that sheds light on Korea's political and economic development. In addition, it was announced that it would include information related to overseas Koreans in domestic textbooks to improve awareness of overseas Koreans.

Local compatriots request support for construction of Korean community center and expansion of scholarship programs

Korean compatriots in the Philippines requested support for the construction of a Korean community center, expansion of scholarship programs for compatriots, the improvement of security education, such as training for the next generation, and support for



OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol (L) talks with officials during his visit to the Korea International School in Manila, the Philippines, on Jan. 23.



OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol (6th from L, front row) poses for a commemorative group photo with attendees to the compatriot invitation meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, on Jan. 24.

the Korea-Philippines business conference.


Lee also held a meeting with local Korean language school teachers to encourage them to work hard and asked them to take interest in ensuring that Korea's development is included in textbooks in their countries of residence. He also met with various compatriots and asked them to actively participate in the 22nd general elections.

Lee then visited Bangkok, Thailand, from Jan. 24 to 26 and held a meeting with compatriots from various walks of life, including officials from the Korean Association in Thailand, the Bangkok branch of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations (World-OKTA) and local Korean language school teachers.

At the meeting, he educated the next generation of Koreans on the political and economic development of Korea in order to achieve the core goals of the overseas Korean policy, which are "cultivating the identities of the next generation of overseas Koreans," "improving their status in their countries of residence" and teaching the next generation of Koreans about Korea's political and economic development through textbooks in their countries of residence. He emphasized that including it in textbooks is very effective and

requested active participation from teachers and influential compatriots.

Participating teachers and compatriots deeply sympathized with Lee's words and suggested supporting Korean language education for parents of multicultural families and identity education for children of multicultural families, as well as providing educational content for Korean language schools tailored to each country's development situation and holding lectures.

At the meeting, policies for overseas Koreans, including the significance of the launch of the OKA and the "100-day road map for the launch of the OKA," were presented, and suggestions from the Thai Korean community were made. 

OKA significantly increases support for Hangeul schools this year

26 pct increase in operating expenses, 45 pct increase in teacher training budget

The Overseas Koreans Agency recently announced it will significantly increase its support for more than 1,460 Hangeul schools around the world, which serve as centers of identity for the next generation of overseas Koreans. The agency has significantly increased its operating expenses and teacher training budget compared with last year to improve the functioning of Korean language schools, the educational environment and teacher morale.

Operating expenses increased by about 27 percent, from 14.1 billion won (US\$10.55 million) last year to 17.73 billion won (US\$13.27 million) this year. The budget for teacher training also increased by about 45 percent, from 1.856 billion won to 2.685 billion won, to improve the educational environment and teacher compensation, which have been the subject of many difficulties.

The increase in operating expenses made it possible to realize teacher service fees, and teacher training can be conducted in a variety of ways, including online and offline, to revitalize education and enhance teacher professionalism. The OKA also decided to actively support schools that are reopening after being closed due to COVID-19.

The OKA will also expand invitational training for Hangeul school teachers, support for local training, online degree programs and teacher training courses. We will also establish a support system within the OKA to continue expanding support for Hangeul schools.

Commissioner Lee Key-cheol: 'Hangeul schools and teachers play important role'

The OKA invited 206 Korean language school teachers from 47 countries around the world to Korea for capacity-building training from Jan. 8-14. The participants decided to take an active role in the "Promoting Korea" program to foster the identities and self-esteem of the next generation of overseas Koreans.

During the discussion, the teachers agreed to take the lead in ▲ establishing a communication channel with local education authorities through cooperation between organizations, such as Korean associations and the Hangeul School Council, ▲ engaging with the local education community, such as parent-teacher associations, to encourage the establishment of classes related to Korean language and Korea's development, and ▲ holding seminars on Korea's development for local education officials. They




OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol delivers an opening speech at the opening ceremony of the 2023 Invitational Training for Hangeul School Teachers at The K Hotel Seoul in Seocho Ward, Seoul, on Jan. 8.



Teachers attending the 2023 Invitational Training for Hangeul School Teachers pose for a group photo after touring the Blue House on Jan. 13.

also suggested establishing classes for parents and establishing a communication channel to inform the OKA when they find errors in local textbooks.

"Hangeul schools and teachers play an important role in fostering the next generation's sense of identity and self-esteem, which is one of the core goals of the government's overseas Korean policy," Lee said. "The increase in the budget for Hangeul schools, even in the midst of a tight fiscal environment, shows that our government attaches great importance to the education of the next generation of overseas Koreans."

He expressed hopes that "The increased budget will improve the operating environment of Hangeul schools, enhance the professionalism of teachers, and promote education about Korea's political and economic developments." 

Gov't finalizes cross-ministerial '1st Basic Plan for Overseas Koreans Policy'

Promoting identity cultivation, strengthening protection and support for compatriots

The Overseas Koreans Agency finalized the "1st Basic Plan for Overseas Koreans Policy" on Jan. 30 after deliberation by the Overseas Koreans Policy Committee (chaired by the foreign affairs minister). The basic plan is a comprehensive government plan that lays out the basic principles and directions of overseas Korean policy for the next five years (2024-2028).

The government previously formed the Overseas Koreans Policy Committee, comprised of vice ministers and vice minister-level officials from 11 ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Overseas Koreans Agency, the Office for Government Policy Coordination, the Ministry of Strategy and Finance, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice, as well as 12 civilian committee members, in accordance with the Basic Law on Overseas Koreans enacted last year. In December last year, the OKA and the Overseas Koreans Policy Committee held a public discussion and established the basic plan by reflecting the diverse voices of overseas Koreans, Koreans and experts.

The finalized plan lays out a vision for a "protective barrier for overseas Koreans around the world and a spokesperson for overseas Korean society."

5 Policy Goals · 14 Priority Tasks · 99 Detailed Tasks

The five policy goals include ▲ establishing a system for strengthening overseas Korean policies, ▲ fostering the overseas Korean identity, ▲ strengthening protection and support for overseas Koreans, ▲ strengthening Korean networks and ▲ getting compatriots to contribute to the realization of a globally central nation, along with 14 priority tasks and 99 detailed tasks.

Specifically, to foster overseas Korean identity, the government identified a task to work with the Korean diaspora to promote Korea's political and economic developments in their countries of residence. To this end, it was decided to include stories about Korea's development in various media, including textbooks, to enhance international trust, and help Koreans maintain their pride and identity.



Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Key-cheol (6th from L, front row) and other participants pose for a group photo at the "Public Discussion on the Basic Plan for Overseas Koreans Policy" held by the OKA and the Korea University Institute of ASEAN Affairs at Hana Square Multimedia Center in Seoul on Dec. 8, 2023.

We will also provide practical support to compatriots in times of crisis abroad, such as quickly providing relief supplies, and promote the People's Livelihood Priority Policy, which carefully notes the living conditions of overseas Koreans and compatriots living in Korea and provides them with warmth and care.


In addition, we will actively contribute to the government's efforts to restore people's economic situations by working with the diaspora community to support domestic small and medium-sized enterprises to expand overseas and create jobs for young people.

In addition, the government will simplify the process of the civil inquiries service overseas and expand the range of services provided online to make life easier for compatriots. The plan also includes establishing an overseas Korean authentication center so that overseas Koreans can verify their identity and conveniently use domestic digital services without a Korean mobile phone.

"The OKA, which was launched last year, has been a longtime desire of the Korean community, so there is a high level of interest in its policy," civilian members who participated in the policy committee said in a joint statement. "The basic plan has been carefully thought out so that no compatriot is left behind, and we expect it to be implemented faithfully for the next five years."

OKA to establish and execute yearly implementation plans

Following the finalization of the basic plan, the OKA will establish an implementation plan for each year and execute it smoothly through pan-ministerial cooperation.

"This year is significant as we established a national-level overseas Korean policy for the first time," OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol said. "The finalization of the basic plan has laid the policy foundation for the development of Korea and overseas Koreans together. We will continue to fulfill our role as a protective barrier for the protection and support of our proud 7 million overseas Koreans and as an advocate for the overseas Korean community that provides practical help." 

Judo coach Ahn Chang-rim: 'I will raise Olympic gold medalists'

'I thank my country for giving third-generation Koreans in Japan the Taegeuk mark'

"The eight-year period I spent competing as a Japanese Korean with the Taegeuk mark was the most brilliant and valuable experience of my life," Ahn Chang-rim, a bronze medalist at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and now coach for the Gyeongbuk Sports Federation, said in a recent media interview, in which he referred to the symbol on the Korean national flag.

"Now that I've retired from the national team, I'm trying to help my younger teammates win Olympic gold medals as a coach," he said. "Having received so much from my home country, I will now focus on inspiring the dreams and hopes of younger Japanese Korean athletes."

He recently appeared in a promotional video for the Overseas Koreans Agency, talking about his life as a Japanese Korean and his experiences competing for the Korean national team. Born and raised in Kyoto, Japan, Ahn, a third-generation Japanese Korean, was introduced to karate and judo at the age of 6 by his father, a karate instructor. He later realized that karate was not for him and focused on judo, winning the 2013 All Japan Student Championships as a sophomore at Tsukuba University, a prestigious institution for judo.

After his victory, his university coach suggested that he would have to naturalize to compete for Japan, but he refused and moved back to his homeland in 2014, enrolling at Yongin University that year.

"As a Korean national, I couldn't compete for the Japanese national team, and I was only able to enter one or two matches a year, so I was thirsty for matches," he said. "Since my grandfather was discriminated against as a Josenjin, and I kept my nationality, I didn't think about naturalizing in Japan but rather challenged myself to compete in Korea."

Passing on home country experience to younger Japanese Korean compatriots; 'I feel a stronger sense of unity with my people'

Coach Ahn earned his taegeuk mark by placing third at the national trials the year he arrived in South Korea. He rose to the top of the world rankings that year, gaining attention as the poster boy for the national team by winning gold medals at the World Judo




Championships in Russia and the World Youth Championships in Miami, the United States, followed by winning the 2018 World Championships.

He was eliminated in the Round of 16 at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro but won bronze at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics before retiring from the national team in 2021.

"I didn't win the gold medal I wanted, but I'm challenging myself to another goal, which is to train juniors who can take my place," he said. "I will continue to strive in all aspects of my life, not just coaching, so that I can set an example for my fellow Japanese Koreans."

Looking back on his first arrival in his motherland, he said, "When I was discriminated against in Japan, I faced it with my Korean identity, but when I was discriminated against in my home country, it was difficult because I felt like my identity was being denied. I wish people would be more understanding and compassionate toward Koreans who have lived in Japan, a country with strong mono-nationalism and exclusivism toward other ethnicities."

"Living in my home country for 10 years has given me a stronger sense of belonging and roots as a Korean," he said, adding he hopes that "more of the next generation of Japanese Koreans will have the opportunity to experience their home country." 

1 Judo coach Ahn Chang-rim, a third-generation Japanese Korean

2 Coach Ahn Chang-rim (far R) poses for a commemorative photo with some of the Japanese Korean athletes who competed in the 2023 National Team Trials for the Gyeongbuk Sports Federation last year.

‘BEEF’ Lee Sung-jin: ‘My experience as Korean American is incorporated into my work’

At Emmy Awards press conference, Steven Yeun: ‘I have firsthand experience of immigrant reality’

“I think the reason ‘BEEF’ resonated with so many people around the world is because (viewers) saw a part of themselves in each character,” director Lee Sung-jin said.

Korean American Lee, who directed the Netflix drama “BEEF,” and lead actor Steven Yeun (Korean name Yeun Sang-yeop) shared their thoughts on the Emmy win and the story behind the show in a Feb. 2 video press conference.

“We wanted to make a movie that was very honest and shed light on the darker parts of our hearts that are hidden deep away,” Lee said.

At this year’s Primetime Emmy Awards on Jan. 15, the world’s most prestigious awards show for television, “BEEF” won eight awards, including Best Miniseries - TV Movie (Limited or Anthology Series or Movie), Best Director, Best Writing, and Best Lead Actor and Actress.

It previously won Best Picture and Best Actor and Actress at the Golden Globes, and swept the Critics’ Choice Awards for Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor and Actress, and Best Supporting Actress (Maria Bello).

Directing and starring roles in black comedy ‘BEEF’

Director Lee, who directed and wrote the series, won Emmy awards for directing and writing, while the lead actor, Steven Yeun, won Best Actor at all three ceremonies.

“There’s a saying that if you draw a Venn diagram and on one side you draw the self-doubt that’s always plagued me and on the other side you draw unbridled narcissism, the intersection in the middle is art,” Lee said. “I go back and forth between the two. Sometimes I think, ‘Do people care about my art?’ and sometimes I think I’m going to win all the awards in the world. I think ‘BEEF’ is somewhere in the middle.”

“It wasn’t easy to anticipate (winning the award). I could only hope,” Yeun said. “In the end, the deepest feeling was gratitude. I was able to tell a story that I believed to be true, and people responded so strongly to it.”


“BEEF” is a black comedy that follows the



story of protagonists Danny (Steven Yeun) and Amy (Ali Wong) after road rage escalates into the most extreme of fights. The series was well-received for its comedic yet sincere portrayal of the characters’ inner resentments and emotions.

In the series, Danny is the child of Korean immigrants and is often shown eating soup at a Korean restaurant and speaking to his family in Korean. These scenes reflect Lee’s own experience of immigrating to the United States as a child.

“In the past, I had to explain things like the Korean church in detail to make the staff understand, but in this movie, I didn’t have to explain much, and in some cases, they understood it better than I did,” Lee said.

When asked how his experience as a Korean in the U.S. was reflected in his work, he said: “I think it was incorporated into the narrative, even if it wasn’t front and center. It will also be a part of my future work.” 



1 Director Lee Sung-jin (R), the winner of Best Director and Writer for a Miniseries for his Netflix drama “BEEF,” and Steven Yeun, the winner of Best Actor, pose with their trophies during the 75th Primetime Emmy Awards at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, California, U.S., on Jan. 15. (Courtesy of EPA)

2 A scene from the drama “BEEF” (Courtesy of Netflix)

U.S. House of Representatives proposes ‘Korean-American Separated Family Registration Act’

To be implemented to promote reunions between North Korea and U.S.; direct communication between two countries also specified



In preparation for the push for separated family reunions between North Korea and the United States, a bipartisan bill was proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives to require the U.S. State Department to separately manage a list of Korean Americans with families in North Korea.

According to the U.S. Congress Bill Information System on Feb. 1, Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D, Virginia) of the House of Representatives and Rep. Michelle Park Steel (R, California), who is of Korean descent, proposed the bill the previous day.

The bill stipulates that the secretary of state identifies and manages a list of Korean American families wishing to reunite with separated family members in North Korea and uses the list to provide information if such an event is held in the future. If the person died, information about the deceased is also to be included in the list. For this purpose, the bill also included provisions requiring a separate budget of US\$1 million to be allocated to the State Department.


The bill also obliges the secretary of state to take necessary measures, including direct dialogue between North Korea and the United States, for the reunion of separated families and to consult with the South Korean government.

Within one year after the bill is passed, the State Department must submit a report on the status of separated families, including North

Korea’s response to requests for separated family reunions, to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and provide the report to the relevant committees annually.

Previously, the U.S. Congress passed the North American Family Reunification Act in 2022, which would allow Korean Americans to meet their families in North Korea, but it did not lead to the actual promotion of separated family reunions.

South and North Korea have held more than 20 separated family reunions since 2000, but Korean Americans who are not Korean citizens have been excluded from participating.

“Many Korean families have been waiting for the opportunity to reunite with their loved ones, and second- and third-generation Korean Americans have also grown up with heartbreaking stories of their families,” Wexton said. “The Separated Family Registration Act brings families together. It is an important measure to encourage cooperation between the U.S. and North Korea to gather together.” 

1 Korean American Rep. Michelle Park Steel (R, California), who proposed the “Korean-American Separated Family Registration Act” with Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D, Virginia) in the U.S. House of Representatives

2 A scene of the reunion of separated families from South and North Korea at the separated family meeting center in Mount Kumgang, North Korea, on Aug. 25, 2018.

Over 8,000 foreign permanent residents have applied for military service over past 20 years

Military Manpower Administration: ‘Due to growing pride in home country among overseas Koreans’

It has been estimated that over the past 20 years, there have been more than 8,000 cases of Korean citizens with permanent residency abroad applying for military service to fulfill their military service obligations.

According to the Military Manpower Administration, 8,053 people have applied for the permanent resident enlistment system since it was first implemented in 2004 until the end of last year.

The number of applicants, which was only 38 in the first year, came to 704 in 2020, 711 in 2021, 678 in 2022 and 523 in 2023. Every year, hundreds of young people leave their studies or livelihoods abroad and voluntarily enlist in the military to protect Korea.

When one receives a foreign permanent residence permit and lives in a foreign country, they are declared a secondary citizen in the year that they turn 38 and are exempted from the duty to fulfill the military service obligation. In the past, if a permanent resident living abroad wanted to enlist, they had to enter the country and visit the local military manpower office, but since approximately 10 years ago, they have been able to apply for enlistment online.

The Military Manpower Administration website also provides instructions in English on how to fill out documents for permanent residents who are not familiar with the Korean language.

The Army Training Center operates a military adaptation program for permanent residents prior to training for new recruits, helping them learn the language, use military facilities and understand barracks life. When reporting a discharge, a Certificate of Honor for Completing Volunteer Military Service is also awarded in the name of the director of the Military Manpower Administration.



Test subjects undergo physical examinations, including a vision acuity test, at the first military service examination center of the Seoul Regional Military Manpower Administration in Yeongdeungpo Ward, Seoul, on Feb. 1, in the first military service examinations of 2024.

Last year, the center also started providing online military service transition briefing sessions for Koreans living in the United States and Japan. This year, they also plan to hold an information session for Koreans in Europe and East Asia.

“The reason permanent residents’ hopes for enlistment have steadily increased is because Korean culture, including K-pop, has spread globally and the country has seen a rise in national competitiveness, resulting in greater pride in their home country among overseas Korean communities,” the Military Manpower Administration said. “We are proud and grateful to the young people voluntarily enlisting for the military service with love for the country and with pride in being citizens of the Republic of Korea.” [\[3\]](#)

Total applications for enlistment from overseas Koreans, including foreign permanent residents

Year	Before 2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Number of people	844	221	280	328	456	604	646	676	685	697	704	711	678	523	8,053

Source: Military Manpower Administration

GLOBAL KOREAN



Former U.S. Ambassador Sung Kim to receive 2024 New American Hero Award UC Riverside professor honored with lifetime achievement award by American Korean Friendship Society

Former South Korean Ambassador to the United States Sung Kim has been selected as the recipient of the 2024 New American Hero Award by the American Korean Friendship Society, a nonprofit organization in the United States, the association announced Jan. 25.

Kim stepped down from public service at the end of last year after serving as the State Department's deputy assistant secretary for Korea; ambassador to South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia; the State Department's special representative for North Korea and the U.S. chief representative to the six-party talks.

"Ambassador Kim has worked day and night to ensure the success of U.S. diplomacy," the association said, revealing that it nominated him because he has "raised the profile of Korean Americans and inspired confidence in Korean Americans to seek public office."

The association also recognized UC Riverside professor Jang Tae-han with its 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Jang is known for his research on the 1992 Los Angeles riots and his advocacy on behalf of Korean Americans in California, the association said.

Since 2000, the association has honored Korean American immigrants who have contributed to the betterment of the U.S. and exemplified the best of the Korean American character. The awards ceremony will be held March 15 in Atlanta.

Andy Kim, Korean American running for U.S. Senate, maintains lead in polls Wife of New Jersey's governor in second place

U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-NJ), the first Korean American politician to seek a U.S. Senate seat, is maintaining his lead in the polls despite facing stiff competition from within his own party.

According to The New York Times (NYT) on Feb. 2, Kim led in the latest Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 504 likely New Jersey voters with 32 percent support. In second place was Tammy Murphy, the wife of New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, with 20 percent support.



Kim leads Murphy by 12 percentage points, but the gap has narrowed considerably from previous polls. In October of last year, a poll by U.S.-based civic organization End Citizens United showed Kim with 42 percent support and Murphy with 1 percent. The 23 percentage-point gap has been cut in half in just over three months.

The New Jersey primary, which will determine the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate, will be held in four months on June 4. Local media have attributed the narrowing gap between Kim and Murphy to the support of her husband, Gov. Murphy.

Gov. Murphy, a Democrat, oversaw a US\$54 billion budget last year alone. For local politicians who rely on state funding, there is no choice but to take account of the governor's presence.

The poll was conducted over the course of a week beginning Jan. 21 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.



Dominic Choi named LA's interim police chief; first Korean American to lead department

LA Mayor Karen Bass: 'He is making history as first Asian'


Los Angeles, the largest city on the United States West Coast, has appointed its first ever Korean American police chief. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass announced the appointment of Korean American Senior Deputy Chief Dominic Choi, 53, as the interim police chief of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on Feb. 7. Choi will be sworn in March 1.

"He was born in Los Angeles, the son of Korean immigrants," Mayor Bass said at a press conference. "He will make history as not only the 58th chief of the LAPD but the first Asian American to hold the position."

The LAPD has more than 9,000 officers. However, Dominic Choi is not the permanent chief but rather an interim chief, a temporary position that will last six to nine months. Interim chiefs are not allowed to apply for the permanent position, the LAPD explained.

Choi joined the LAPD in 1995 after graduating from the University of Southern California (USC) and worked his way up through the ranks, serving in patrol assignments in various divisions. He was promoted to deputy chief in 2019 and assistant chief in 2021.

"I am honored to have this opportunity," Choi said at a press conference. "I know that this appointment comes with tremendous responsibility."

The previous LAPD chief, Michel Moore, announced his resignation in January amid growing criticism of the department's use of excessive force. 



‘We are struggling to overcome damage from wildfires,’ says Kelly Yoo, president of Maui Korean Community Association

Six months after worst wildfires in history, ‘many Koreans lost homes and businesses’

“The economic impact and emotional distress are unspeakable, but Koreans here are trying to overcome adversity by finding new jobs and new businesses.”

Kelly Yoo (Korean name Yoo Sun-hee) (53), president of the Maui Korean Community Association made the statement in a phone interview with the media on Feb. 8, six months after the worst wildfires in the history of the U.S. state of Hawaii swept through the island of Maui, once known as “paradise on Earth.”

On Aug. 8, 2023, a wildfire damaged or destroyed more than 2,200 buildings and claimed the lives of at least 100 people in Maui, mainly in the historic beach town of Lahaina on the western part of the island. More than 7,000 people were left homeless. The 500 or so Koreans living in the area were fortunate not to lose their lives, but many were devastated by the loss of their homes and businesses, Yoo said.

Since the fire, the Maui Korean Association has distributed about US\$3,000 in donations collected and sent by Korean associations across the U.S. in three rounds to the affected Koreans, with a total of 25 families receiving them, Yoo said.

“There were some people affected who had not yet interacted with the Maui Korean Association or had just come to Maui,” Yoo said. “It will take more time to fully recover.”

One Korean American victim, Yoo recounted, was a woman in her 40s who had worked hard for years to save up for a condominium in Lahaina, which she lost in the fire, along with her pets. The woman, who barely escaped with her husband and a handbag, is currently staying in temporary



1



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housing provided by the authorities, and six months later, she says she is still suffering from PTSD.

‘Tourists need to come back to revive the economy; please come to Hawaii’

The housing shortage, which has become more severe since the wildfires, is also a threat to local residents’ livelihoods.

“There was a housing shortage before the wildfires because there is limited space on the island, and there are not many houses, but after the wildfires, it became more serious,” Yoo said. “House prices and rent have increased dramatically and are too expensive for people.”

Local media outlets have reported that some homeowners have taken advantage of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s program that subsidizes a significant portion of rent for fire survivors by evicting existing tenants and renting to survivors to receive the subsidy.

“These reports are true,” Yoo confirmed.

Even if they weren’t directly affected by the fires, Yoo said, many Korean Americans

who own businesses or are self-employed have been hit economically, as tourism across the island has been halted for some time and residents’ spending spirit has been dampened.

Yoo, who owns a hair salon in downtown Maui, also has been through a difficult period.

“People living in the city weren’t directly affected by the wildfires, but the cost of living went up a lot, and people were afraid of a recession, so they didn’t spend money,” Yoo said. “Our hair salon was also hit hard for a while.”

“But recently, tourists have been coming back, and the economy is slowly picking up,” she said. “Maui’s economy can only recover if tourists come back like before. I hope they don’t have the preconceived notion that it’s a fire-affected area and hope they come visit.” 🙏

1 Kelly Yoo, president of the Maui Korean Community Association

2 A destroyed building and damaged sign are seen in the town of Lahaina on Aug. 15, 2023, after a wildfire swept through the Hawaiian island of Maui one week earlier.

Sam Cho, chairman of Port of Seattle, ‘expanding economic connections with Korea’

First person of color to chair Port of Seattle’s board of directors in 112-year history

“I would like to expand economic connections between Washington state, the logistics hub of the Western United States, and South Korea to build a stronger relationship between the two countries.”

Sam Cho (Korean name Cho Se-hyun), chairman of the board of the Port of Seattle, the governmental body that oversees the Port of Seattle, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and the Port of Seattle-Tacoma in the U.S. state of Washington, recently met with reporters at his office to discuss his ambitions as a bridge between South Korea and Seattle.

At 33, Cho is the youngest member of the Port of Seattle Board of Commissioners and the first person of color in the agency’s 112-year history.

In April, Cho will lead a regional delegation to Seoul, Busan and Daejeon to expand economic connections between South Korea and Seattle. Washington state’s trade with South Korea is the fourth largest after China, Japan and Vietnam.

In particular, he is promoting student exchanges between the University of Washington (UW) and KAIST to foster friendship between the two communities and expand people-to-people exchanges between young people.

Over the past year serving as chairman of the Port of Seattle Board of Commissioners, he established a twinning relationship between the Port of Seattle and the Port of Busan and created a vision for a green shipping corridor between the two ports.

He also helped redirect Hyundai exports from South Korea to the Port of Seattle-Tacoma from the neighboring Port of Portland, Oregon, to improve logistics efficiency. Last year, 100,000 Hyundai and Kia vehicles entered the port.

Youngest board member at 33; fluent in Korean

His parents immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1980s, and although he was born in Chicago and raised in Seattle, he has a deep love for Korea. He speaks fluent Korean and makes sure to learn Korean names when he meets Koreans. He even has a model of a turtle ship on his desk in his office.



Chairman Sam Cho of the Port of Seattle, United States

He was elected to the Port of Seattle Board of Commissioners and made headlines when he was sworn in in both English and Korean. He first came to the community’s attention in November 2019, when he was elected to the board by 2.2 million voters in King County, the most populous county in Washington.

He was 29 years old at the time, and he made a splash by winning a seven-candidate primary and then defeating Bellevue Mayor Grant Degginger in the runoff.

He was running a trading company at the time. When an avian influenza outbreak in South Korea caused an egg scare in the winter of 2016, he sought out egg-supplying farms and started a business exporting eggs to and from South Korea through the Port of Seattle, gaining hands-on experience in trade and logistics.

In January of last year, at the age of 32, he was elected by Port of Seattle board members to serve as chairman. He was the first person of color and the youngest commissioner in the port’s 112-year history. This led to local media, including The Seattle Times, calling him “one of Seattle’s most influential people.” Since September of last year, he has also served as the director of the city’s Office of Strategic Planning, where he develops the city’s economic policy. 🇺🇸

U.K. Ministry of Education, University of Oxford collaborate to study Korean language learning phenomenon

Professor Cho Ji-eun: ‘Korean language learning stabilizes students’ emotions’

The British government and the University of Oxford have launched a joint study on why students learn the Korean language and its effects. Oxford professor Cho Ji-eun recently said she and the U.K. Department for Education will launch a seven-month study on learning the Korean language until July this year and publish a policy report. The study will look into the “yeol-gong” (study hard) phenomenon, in which British teenagers are losing interest in other foreign languages but are learning Korean on their own, even when it is not related to exams, and that even their life attitudes are improving through this.

Professor Cho said her research with the ministry is supported by her appointment as a policy engagement fellow at Oxford University. Other partners include the Korean Council of Education in Britain.

“It’s very unusual to be selected as a policy engagement fellow for a project working with the Ministry of Education on non-European foreign language education policy,” she said. “We are having a policy roundtable at the Ministry of Education headquarters soon.

“The ministry is wondering why more students are learning Korean, which is not on the GCSE curriculum and is not funded by the government, when the popularity of foreign language subjects is declining across the board,” she said. “They were even more interested due to the fact that influences, such as K-pop, have a positive effect on the emotions of students learning Korean in economically disadvantaged areas, as well as the fact that it is not a temporary learning experience.”

First, she interviewed the principals of five schools that offered Korean as an after-school program, and they were all very satisfied.

“There was an analysis that students felt a sense of belonging by learning Korean or that students that had never left their neighborhood felt like they could communicate with the world through Korean,” she said, “and some even said they wanted to teach it to the whole school.

“Unlike the U.S., the U.K. is unique in that there are very few Korean children in the U.K., but the number of students learning Korean is increasing,” she said. “We will share the policy report with the U.S., and U.K. Commonwealth countries and use it to push for the inclusion of Korean as a regular subject at GCSE.”



1 British students learn Korean. (Courtesy of the Korean Education Centre in Britain)


2 Dr. Cho Ji-eun, a professor at Oxford University, delivers a lecture.

Oxford University launches Korean language teacher training program

Three secondary schools, including Whitgift School, a prestigious private boys’ school near London, taught Korean as a regular course last year, and 43 schools, including Headington School, a private girls’ school attended by actress Emma Watson, ran after-school classes. The total number of students taking the classes was 629.

The Korean Education Centre in Britain signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with schools that wanted to offer Korean language classes and provided them with instructors and materials for two years, increasing from three in 2012 to 45 in 2021 and 70 in 2023.

“We need to invest now to ensure that British youth are exposed to Korean language and culture during their formative years so that they can become pro-Korean and become a resource for Korea in the future,” Cho said.

To train Korean language teachers, the Korean Education Centre in Britain has piloted an emotional stability course at the University of Central Lancashire since 2022, and this year it will open a program at Oxford University. The university is also considering developing the program into a degree program like TESOL (Teachers of English Internationally), said Ahn Hee-seong, the director of the center. 

By Yoonjeong Choi,
correspondent, Yonhap News Agency, London, England

Korean coaches dominate in shooting, taekwondo, archery in Vietnam

Park Chung-gun in shooting, Kim Gil-tae in taekwondo, Park Hyo-cheol in baseball, Park Chae-soon in archery

South Korea and Vietnam celebrated the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2022, and since upgrading their relationship to a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” the two countries have been expanding exchanges not only in the economic sector but also in sports. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, South Korean companies have been the largest investors in Vietnam. Korean companies have made significant contributions to Vietnam’s economic development by creating jobs, raising incomes and driving industrialization.

Separately, the emergence of “Park Hang-seo Football Magic” in the sports sector has played a major role in broadening Vietnamese people’s familiarity with Korea. Coach Park arrived in Vietnam in October 2017 and has been making history ever since he led the Vietnamese team to a runner-up finish at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) U-23 Championship the next year.

He became a “national hero” after leading Vietnam to its first-ever Asian Games quarterfinal appearance (2018), victory at the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games (2019) and World Cup qualification.

Park stepped down as national team coach after the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) Mitsubishi Cup final in January last year. Since then, many Vietnamese people have continued to recognize the hero’s achievements and hard work during his five years at the helm of the national team.

Local conditions still poor; Korean government, business support needed

There are several other Korean sports coaches in Vietnam. These include Park Chung-gun, head coach of the national shooting team, Kim Gil-tae in taekwondo, Shim Yi-seop in sailing, Park Hyo-chul in baseball, Lee Myung-sik in para taekwondo and Park Chae-soon in archery. Park Chung-gun was responsible for bringing Vietnam its first ever Olympic gold medal at the Rio 2016 Games in the men’s



10-meter air pistol event.

If their leadership continues to prove successful and gain traction in the future, the bilateral relationship through sports exchanges is expected to gain momentum. However, there are voices saying that the conditions under which the Korean leaders are working are too poor for them to perform to their full potential, and they need support from the Korean government and corporate sector.

The Vietnamese government’s budgetary support for the national team, both in competitions and in everyday training, is inadequate in many ways, especially when compared with South Korea, which has a decadeslong policy of promoting elite sports and has seen great results.

Interpreters, training equipment and venues are often unavailable, and some coaches barely make ends meet with their stipends. It’s not uncommon for some athletes to have to cook their meals in rice cookers in their lodgings when traveling to competitions or training overseas because they don’t have enough money.

“CJ Vietnam is supporting the national taekwondo team,” said one figure from the sports industry. “I hope there will be more such cases of local companies helping Vietnamese national teams and coaches.” [\[장\]](#)

By Kim Bum-soo,
correspondent, Yonhap News Agency, Hanoi, Vietnam

1 Former Vietnam coach Park Hang-seo shakes hands with Vietnamese players during a friendly football match between the South Korea and Vietnam national teams at Suwon World Cup Stadium in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province, on Oct. 17, 2023.

2 Vietnam’s national shooting team coach Park Chung-gun (L) and athlete Hoang Xuan Binh attend a press conference at the Changwon Shooting Range in Changwon, Gyeongnam, on Sept. 3, 2018. Hoang, who was coached by Park, won a gold medal in the men’s 10-meter pistol shooting event at the Rio Olympics on Aug. 7, 2016.

Koryo artist Moon Victor settles in Gwangju's Koryo-saram Village

Koryo painter Moon Victor (72) has settled in the Gwangju Koryo-saram Village. According to the Gwangju Koryo-saram Village, the artist, who has been traveling back and forth between Kazakhstan and Gwangju to prepare for his move to South Korea, arrived at the village on Jan. 30.

Moon has been preparing to permanently reside in the village since he traveled to Gwangju in 2022 for medical treatment, including obtaining an F4 (overseas Korean) visa. In June last year, the village launched a fundraising campaign to support Moon's dream of resettling in his ancestral land and building an art museum. A small exhibition room, a painting room and a living space have been provided on the second floor of the village's support center.

"I will pass on the painting techniques I have learned to my descendants so that they can continue the strong national spirit and indomitable pioneering spirit of my Korean ancestors," Moon said.

Moon was born in 1951 in Bestobe, Ushtobe, Kazakhstan, and graduated from the Gogol Almaty Fine Art College in 1975. He began his artistic career in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1976, and has since captured the history, culture and people of the Koryo people in



Artist Moon Victor works in his painting studio. (Courtesy of Gwangju Gwangsan Ward)

his paintings. His works include "General Hong Bumdo," "Ussuriysk My Grandfather" and "1937 Koryo Forced Deportation Train."

His works are scattered around the world, including the Presidential Palace and the National Art Museum in Kazakhstan, as well as in the United States, Germany, England, France, Egypt, Japan and Russia.

Mongolian Korean Association delivers donation to gas truck explosion victims' families and authorities

The Mongolian Korean Association (Chairman Park Ho-seon) recently donated 59 million tugrik (US\$17,368), which was collected for the families of three firefighters who died in service in a gas truck explosion in Mongolia.

On Jan. 24, a truck carrying 60 tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) collided with a passenger car at an intersection in Mongolia's capital city of Ulaanbaatar, triggering a chain of explosions that spread to an apartment complex and other places, according to the Mongolian Korean Association. The accident killed three firefighters and injured more than 10 people.

To comfort the families of the victims, the Korean Association launched a weeklong fundraising drive on Jan. 25, and more than



The Mongolian Korean Association delivers a donation to the families of the firefighters who died in a gas truck explosion.

200 Koreans came together to help the cause. On Feb. 7, the Korean Association held a donation ceremony at Fire Station No. 63 of the National Disaster Prevention Agency, where the martyred firefighters worked, and handed over 15 million tugrik.

They also visited the National Disaster Prevention Agency, which worked diligently at the accident site, and donated over 14 million tugrik worth of emergency and relief

supplies.

"When a tragedy strikes in the community, we must unite and lend a helping hand," a Korean Association official said. "We hope that even a small amount of money will help the families of the martyrs, and the National Disaster Prevention Agency will honor the sacrifices of the firefighters."

Mexican Korean community donates CCTVs to Mexico City's Koreatown

A number of CCTVs have been installed in Koreatown and its shops in Mexico City thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Korean community in Mexico and the support of the Overseas Koreans Agency. On Jan. 25, the Mexico City Korean Civil Police Corps and the Korean Embassy in Mexico held a CCTV donation ceremony at C5, a CCTV control center in Mexico City.

C5, which stands for Command, Control, Statistics, Communication and Citizen Support taken from the first letter of each word in Spanish, is a control tower that integrates functions, such as the 112 General Command Room of the National Police Agency, the 119 General Command Room of the Fire Department and CCTV control centers of local governments. The donation ceremony is the culmination of a project conceived and led by the Korean Civil Police Corps to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Mexico in 2022.

Based on funds raised in the Korean community led by the Korean Civil Police Corps, a voluntary security cooperation organization, and the OKA, the idea of the project is to install Korean-made CCTVs in areas with a high concentration of Koreans and then donate them to Mexico City for operation, maintenance and repair.

The Korean Civil Police Corps said 100 CCTVs have been



Participants pose for a photo during the Mexico Korean community CCTV donation ceremony at C5, a CCTV control center in Mexico City, on Jan. 25. From third left to right, Jang Won, president of the Mexico Korean Association; Jung Sang-goo, chief of the Mexico City Korean Civil Police Corps; Heo Tae-wan, Korean ambassador to Mexico; and Juan Manuel Garcia Ortega, director of C5 in Mexico City.

installed in Zona Rosa and Centro, the main business areas for Koreans in Mexico City. Two cameras each were installed in 50 locations, including near Hangeul schools that educate Korean children in Korean language and culture.

“Thanks to the support of the Korean community here, we were able to successfully carry out the project,” said Jung Sang-gu, chief of the Civil Police Corps. The Civil Police Corps raised US\$42,000, more than the initial donation goal of \$35,000, due to the enthusiastic response from Koreans, he added.

Gwangju Korean Village opens care center for elderly Koreans

Gwangju Koryo-saram Village (Chair Shin Jooya) in Gwangsan Ward, Gwangju, recently opened an elderly care center to help Koryo elders living in Korea. The center is for those with limited mobility and was created by remodeling the first floor of the village's former day care center.

Equipped with a meeting room, activity room, kitchen and dining room, the center offers Korean language classes, dementia prevention education programs, employment support programs and a senior choir.

The center provides free lunch five times a week for seniors over 70 who have difficulty finding employment and irregular free meals for seniors who skip breakfast and dinner.

“We are grateful to Gwangju City, Gwangsan Ward, and individual



The opening ceremony of the Gwangju Koryo-saram Village Elderly Care Center

donors for their generous support,” Shin said. “We will continue to make our elderly Koryo compatriots, descendants of independence fighters, feel the warmth of their homeland.”

Yangdong Village and Oksan Seowon in Gyeongju, North Gyeongsang Province

A spot where tradition and modernity coexist

Gyeongju, North Gyeongsang Province, a city of cultural heritage, has many attractions with a long history. The centuries-old Yangdong Village is still inhabited by descendants. It is also home to Oksan Seowon temple, which honors Joseon Dynasty Neo-Confucian scholar and intellectual Hoejae Yi Eon-jeok (1491-1553). Both are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

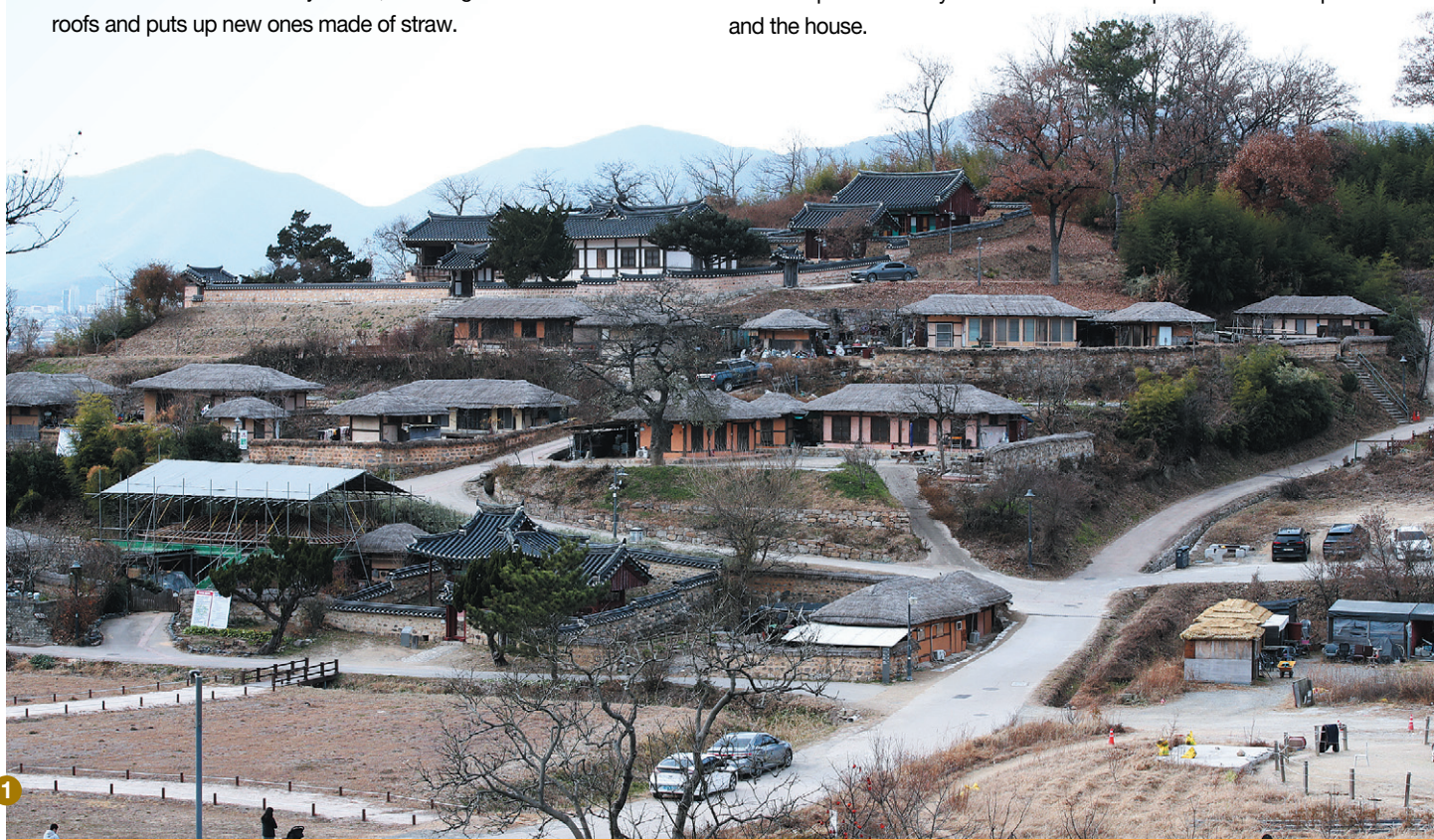
Yangdong Village is home to two families, the Son clan of Gyeongju and the Lee clan of Yeosu, who have lived here for generations. There are also several large houses. As you enter the village, you'll see tiled and thatched houses on both high and low ground.

There are 165 buildings, including a pavilion and a school. From the village entrance, you can see the surrounding mountains, streams and plains. On the day I visited, there was quite a bit of straw piled up on the plains. Workers were weaving it using a machine. It is said that every winter, the village takes down the old roofs and puts up new ones made of straw.

Many Yangdong Village houses and pavilions are cultural heritage properties

Yangdong Village has many houses and pavilions that are designated as cultural properties. The houses are inhabited by residents, so the extent to which they are open to the public may be limited. I contacted several people about the houses in advance to see if they were open to the public. I was provided information by local guides, residents of individual houses and the chairman of Yangdong Village.

I first visited Gwangajeong (觀稼亭), a gazebo designated as a treasure. The information board says that it was the residence of Woojae Son Joongdon (1463-1529), an upright government official during the Joseon Dynasty, and that Gwangajeong means to watch the grain grow. After passing through the entrance of the building, I saw a neatly organized yard and a great hall. It felt like a cultural space where you can savor and explore the landscape and the house.





We also found Mucheomdang, another treasure. This was the Jecheong Hall of the Hoejae Yi Eon-jeok family. The house was once the residence of Hoejae Yi Eon-jeok's father, Yi Bun (1463-1500). He came to Yangdong Village as Son Soh's son-in-law and put down roots.

On the wall of the main hall, there was a plaque that read, “左海琴書” (Jwa Hae Geum Seo, meaning “a village inhabited by a scholar in Yeongnam”). It was written by Heungseon Daewon-gun before he came to power. It was a different feeling to contemplate nature from the tidy floor of Mucheomdang Hall.

We headed to another treasure, the “hyangdan” (香壇). From the entrance, it looked like several spaces of the house were glued together, but when I went inside with the cooperation of the residents, I liked the three-dimensionality and the openness. The space between the upper and lower Sarang-chaе and Haengrang-chaе rooms had considerable depth, and the stone pillars supporting the An-chaе (main house) seemed solid.

As you walk through Yangdong Village, the view changes depending on where you stand. What these houses have in common is that they are still inhabited today. “We play music to remind others that people still live in this house full of history,” said Son Sung-hoon (19th-generation grandson of Son Joong-don), who welcomed us at Gwangajeong.

“This is a place where descendants have been living and working hard for over 600 years, and it's a house where people live,” said Mr. Lee Ji-rak (17th-generation descendant of Yi Eon-jeok), a resident of Mucheomdang. “It's not a mummified heritage; it's a living and breathing heritage,” emphasized Lee Ji-kwan, chairman of the Yangdong Village Steering Committee, who guided us through the village.



Oksan Seowon, a monastery dedicated to neo-Confucian scholar Yi Eon-jeok

Although I was disappointed to leave Yangdong Village, I visited the nearby Oksan Seowon, which is about a 15-minute drive away. The path leading from the parking lot was impressive. It was winter, so the trees had shed their leaves, but they looked old and were lined up on the road.

Next to the Seowon was a valley, lined with geometric black boulders. The sound of the stream was not too loud or too quiet, and it calmed my heart as soon as I focused on it. Even though it was winter, there were yellow leaves on the ground under the thick ginkgo tree to the left of the entrance.

The surrounding juniper trees and pine trees in the hills behind the temple also contributed to the stunning scenery. A seowon is usually located in a place with good natural light. The person who it was built for is also said to have a strong connection to the area.

Oksan Seowon was built in honor of Yi Eon-jeok, a Neo-Confucian scholar born in Yangdong Village. His work is said to have been passed down to Toegye Yi Hwang. The information board at Oksan Seowon says that it was founded in 1572 by Buyun Lee Jae-min of Gyeongju in accordance with the will of the local Confucian scholars.

It became Sa-aek Seowon during the Joseon Dynasty. Oksan Seowon was one of nine seowons inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019, grouped together as Korean Seowons. Seowon is usually divided into three sections: a recreational space (遊息), a study space (講學) and a ceremonial space (祭享).

If you pass through the main gate of Oksan Seowon, you will find Mubyeronru (無邊樓), which was designated as a treasure in 2022. Mubyeronru means an endless pavilion. The lower floor is used as an entrance, while the upper floor is the main hall. From the top floor, we can see the main gate of Seowon and the outside landscape at the same time.

It is said to be the first building to introduce the “numaru” format to Korean Seowon architecture. After passing through the Mubyeronru, dormitories are on either side, followed by the Guindang, a study hall. “We continue to live our lives to preserve the Seowon even in modern times,” said Lee Ji-sung, chairman of the Oksan Seowon Steering Committee. 📖

- 1 A view of Yangdong Village in Gyeongju
- 2 Gwangajeong in Yangdong Village
- 3 A view of Oksan Seowon in Yangdong Village
- 4 A marker stone with information on Oksan Seowon

Launch of civil complaint service using KakaoTalk chat

The Overseas Koreans Agency recently announced that overseas Koreans can now use KakaoTalk chat to receive civil service consultation services in addition to international calls. On June 5, 2023, the OKA opened the Overseas Korean Service Support Center in Gwanghwamun in Seoul and has been providing 24/7 telephone consultation services 365 days a year through the Overseas Korean 365 Citizen Call Center (02-6747-0404).

However, it was inconvenient for overseas Koreans living abroad to pay expensive international call charges to use the call center. To improve this problem, the Overseas Korean Service Support Center has established a consultation service using KakaoTalk.

In addition to the text consultation service, the OKA plans to add various channels, such as data calls (web calls) and online chat (web chat), so that people can use the service in various ways.

“Through this service expansion, we expect overseas Koreans to receive more convenient civil complaint services without incurring call charges,” said Kim Yeon-sik, head of the Overseas Korean Service Support Center.



This photo shows the KakaoTalk chat consultation service of the Overseas Koreans 365 Citizen Call Center.

OKA, Yonhap News, VANK host 2024 National Branding Exhibition

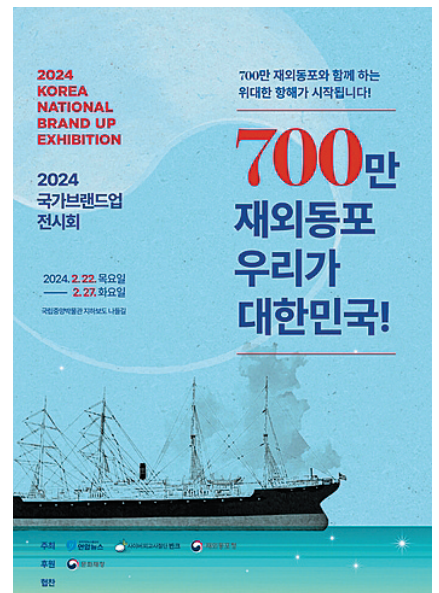
The Overseas Koreans Agency co-hosted the 2024 National Branding Exhibition with Yonhap News and the cyber diplomatic mission VANK from Feb. 22-27 at the underground walkway of the National Museum of Korea in Yongsan Ward, Seoul. The event was sponsored by the Cultural Heritage Administration.

The theme of the exhibition, which aims to enhance the country’s brand by making Korea well known at home and abroad, was “We, the 7 million overseas Koreans, are Korea,” with the focus on promoting Korea’s political and economic development, such as advancing the inclusion of Korea’s political and economic development in textbooks in the countries where overseas Koreans live.

Devastated after the Korean War, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, but today it has grown to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and is one of the world’s top 10 economies.

The exhibition emphasizes that of the more than 80 countries that gained independence after World War II, South Korea is the only one that has achieved both European Union-level economic growth and democracy at the same time.

Prior to the opening ceremony on Feb. 22, the 11th Youth Ambassadors for Public Diplomacy developed by Yonhap News Agency and VANK were inaugurated, and there were special lectures by Park Ki-tae, head of VANK, and Lee Key-cheol, the OKA commissioner.



A poster for the 2024 National Branding Exhibition

Deputy Commissioner Choi Young-han visits Sakhalin compatriots returning home for Lunar New Year

Overseas Koreans Agency Deputy Commissioner Choi Young-han visited and presented gifts to Sakhalin compatriots, who returned to Korea for the Lunar New Year, on Feb. 8. Choi visited the Incheon Sakhalin Compatriots Welfare Center in Yeonsu Ward, Incheon.

The welfare center, located inside the Incheon Red Cross Hospital, was established in 1999 to promote the welfare of elderly first-generation Sakhalin Koreans' limited mobility due to illness or disability. The OKA delivered New Year's gifts to more than 70 elderly residents in need of care.

"We are pleased to meet with compatriot elders on the first Lunar



OKA Deputy Commissioner Choi Young-han (2nd from L, on the podium) visits the Incheon Sakhalin Compatriots Welfare Center on Feb. 8 to meet elders from the Sakhalin diaspora who have returned to Korea permanently and to deliver New Year's gifts.

New Year after the opening of the OKA," Choi said. "We will strive to continue providing practical assistance, starting with the long-awaited revision of the Sakhalin Compatriots Law."

On Jan. 16, the OKA promulgated a bill to amend the Sakhalin Compatriots Act, which will expand the eligibility for the permanent return, starting in 2025, from "one immediate relative" to all children. In addition, the OKA will improve the system to

support the stable settlement of Sakhalin compatriots who have permanently returned to Korea and will promote programs, such as visits to the motherland for second and third generations, and commemorations of the enactment of the Sakhalin Compatriots Act.

Overseas Koreans Agency's Book Recommendations



'People Like Snowflakes'

Written by Choi Jeong-hak

Published by Yeonsu Cultural Center

The Yeonsu Cultural Center in Yeonsu Ward, Incheon, recently published "People Like Snowflakes," a book containing the stories of Sakhalin Koreans living within the district.

The book is a collection of oral accounts of the lives and migration stories of five Sakhalin Koreans living in Yeonsu Ward, Incheon. Sakhalin is an island north of Hokkaido, Japan, and Koreans began migrating here in the 1800s for job opportunities. Then, in the early 1900s, Japan moved a large number of Koreans here for forced labor. After liberation in 1945, about 4,000 Sakhalin Koreans returned to the country, and currently, about 2,690 are alive. Of these, about 80 are staying at the Incheon Sakhalin Community Welfare Center in Yeonsu Ward.



Four people who helped publish "People Like Snowflakes" -- (L to R, standing) interviewer Nam Young-sun, Sakhalin Community Welfare Center Director Park Chang-gyu, writer Choi Jeong-hak and interviewer Ahn Seong-sook -- and five Sakhalin Koreans pose for a photo. (Provided by the Yeonsu Cultural Center)

The Yeonsu Cultural Center announced that it wrote this book to understand the culture and life of Sakhalin Koreans and create an archive. Author Choi Jeong-hak said in his publication address: "I would like to thank the five elders, teachers who participated in interviews and the Yeonsu Cultural Center, which participated in the long-term oral presentation. Small stories can come together to tell one history, and through this book, the people of Yeonsu Ward can better relate to one

another. I hope that we will respect the culture and contribute to its advancement."

The book is not for sale and can be viewed in person at Yeonsu Ward government offices, schools, libraries and other places. It can also be viewed on the Yeonsu Regional Studies Archive website (www.archivecenter.net/YeonsuArchive), which is a valuable source for regional studies research and learning.





Shenyang, China, commemorates 105th anniversary of Muo Declaration of Independence



An event commemorating the 105th anniversary of the Muo Declaration of Independence, which was read in Northeast China during the Japanese occupation, was held Jan. 19 in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China. Organized by the Shenyang Committee of the Council for Korean Democracy, Peace and Unification, the event, which was attended by more than 100 Koreans, featured a reading of the Declaration of Independence, a three-part chant and an independence song. “Our people have the DNA to unite and overcome difficulties in times of national crisis,” said Park Young-wan, vice chairman of the China Regional Council for Korean Democracy, Peace and Unity. “Let’s continue the will of our forefathers who fought for independence against Japan 100 years ago, overcome the difficulties we face and strive for national unity.” The Declaration of Independence is said to have been made on Feb. 1, 1919, in Manchuria, now northeastern China, by 39 overseas independence activists, including Jo So-ang, Shin Chae-ho, Ahn Chang-ho and Kim Jwa-jin, but the exact time and place are unclear. It is said to have influenced the 2.8 Declaration of Independence in Tokyo and the 3.1 Declaration of Independence read at Taehwagwan in Seoul in the same year.

Paju City Central Library launches project to document returned Sakhalin Koreans

The Paju City Central Library in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, recently announced a project to document the lives and hardships of Korean compatriots who migrated to Sakhalin during the Japanese occupation. Paju has been home to more than 140 permanently returned Sakhalin Koreans since 2009, and most of them are elderly people born around the 1940s. The city decided to organize this project to identify and record their history and living conditions. The archive project will be carried out by connecting interviewees with archival activists trained by the Central Library for one-on-one conversations. In addition, the project will collect historical photographs and documents that individuals own and will publish a record book. “This project will provide an opportunity to rediscover the forgotten lives of Korean compatriots in Sakhalin and share them with the public, and at the same time, it will increase the number of our compatriots returning from Sakhalin,” said Seo Byung-kwon, head of the Central Library.



Gwangju’s Wolgok Koryoin Cultural Center to host special exhibition on Choi Jae-hyung’s possessions and enhancing of cultural artifacts

The Wolgok Koryoin Cultural Center, part of the Gwangju Koryoin Village in Gwangju, recently announced that it will hold a special exhibition of artifacts and folklore related to Choi Jae-hyung, an independence activist and Korean national leader. The exhibition, which marks the second anniversary of the museum’s opening, will feature artifacts and explanatory materials related to Choi Jae-hyung, who led the way in uniting Korean society, education and enlightenment, the independence movement and independence army activities. The museum also has an exhibition room that collects photos and books related to traditional seasonal customs, such as food, first birthdays, marriage and 60th birthday celebrations, which were preserved by Koreans who were scattered throughout Central Asia due to forced migration by the former Soviet Union in 1937. “We are playing a role in educating the next generation of Koryo people who have settled in Korea about their roots and instilling a sense of pride,” said Kim Byung-hak, director of the Cultural Center. “We will continue to enhance the artifacts to restore the forgotten history of the Koryo people.”



WAKA signs MOU with Inha University’s Institute of International Relations to research Korean compatriots

The World Assembly of Korean Associations (WAKA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Inha University’s Institute of International Relations (Director Lee Jin-young) on Feb. 7 for joint research on the Korean diaspora. Under the agreement, the two organizations will collaborate on joint academic events, mutual exchange collaborations and the sharing of resource collections. They will also work together to spread K-academia, as well as utilizing and promoting diaspora-related content and marketing of Korean-style online courses (K-MOOC). Since 2022, the two organizations have jointly held the Seminar on Public Diplomacy Activities of Korean Associations and published the “Guidebook for Public Diplomacy Activities of Korean Associations.”



We introduce events of compatriot organizations, such as Korean associations and Korean language schools. Please share your news via this email: okaspokesperson@korea.kr

Why it is important to instill Korean language and culture in next generation

Instilling Korean language and culture in the next generation of Koreans is crucial to preserving and advancing Korea's cultural heritage. The Korean language is the means by which we communicate and express our thoughts, and Korean culture embodies our values and traditions. Therefore, by maintaining and passing on our language and culture, we can preserve our identity.

Understanding and valuing one's language and culture helps to strengthen the self and build pride in oneself. The next generation of overseas Koreans with bicultural backgrounds wants to stay connected to their country of origin, and maintaining and speaking Korean helps them feel their roots and develop their identity.


It also strengthens family connections. Language and cultural understanding with parents can lead to family conversations that create deeper understanding and closeness through shared experiences and interests. Sharing language and culture with your parents can strengthen family bonds, facilitate interactions with Korean society and play a big role in perpetuating cultural heritage.

Learning Korean language and culture, with its many histories and traditions, can help pass on cultural heritage to the next generation, who may not have an understanding of Korean culture, and by understanding Korean history and traditions, they can take pride in and cherish their nationality and culture.

The Korean language can open up more opportunities in the global marketplace as Korea's economic and cultural importance increases around the world. Korean language skills can expand employment opportunities and give one a competitive edge, and the Korean language can enable access to a wide range of information and opportunities. It also helps to improve South Korea's economic development and international influence.

Cultural understanding and respect are essential in a multicultural society. By spreading and maintaining Korean language and culture, we can promote diversity and increase understanding between different cultures. By learning and understanding one's own language and culture, it promotes interactions and cooperation.

The recent hallyu craze, centered on Korean culture and K-pop, has spread globally, providing an opportunity to experience different cultures and connect with the world, and has also sparked interest in and understanding of Korean culture.

For this reason, instilling Korean language and culture in the next generation plays an important role in promoting their growth and development, maintaining cultural diversity, and making them more connected and competitive in a globalized world. Proper transmission of the Korean language and culture will make an important contribution to the next generation's understanding and preservation of cultural heritage. 



Dr. Younghee Park,
president of the Council of Hangeul Schools of the
Americas



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

Calls for participants for 2024 World Next Generation Korean Congress

April 30-May 3 in Seoul and provinces



The Overseas Koreans Agency is now accepting applications for the 2024 World Next Generation Korean Congress, which will be held in Seoul and provinces for three days and four nights starting April 30. The event invites talents in the political, economic, social, cultural and artistic fields to build the capabilities of the next generation of Korean leaders from around the world and help them build a global network.

Seventy participants will be selected from among overseas Koreans between the ages of 25 and 45. Prospective participants include those who have contributed to the development of the overseas Korean community through their professional fields; those who work in politics, economics, law, media, cultural arts and international organizations; executives of outstanding next-

generation organizations or professional organizations in each region; and those who have been nominated by diplomatic missions.

During the congress, participants will hear keynote lectures introducing overseas Korean policy initiatives, such as informing the public about Korea's development, visit key government agencies, share experiences in fostering the Korean identity and entering mainstream society, network by region and field, visit industries and experience their motherland's culture. The application deadline is Feb. 29, and the selection results will be announced March 15. Participation is free of charge, and participants will receive partial round-trip airfare and room and board during the event. For more information, please visit <http://oka.go.kr/>.

OKA Commissioner's Activities

- Feb. 21: Visit to the Han-Ve Family Association (Korean Vietnamese Family Association) Headquarters
- Feb. 22: Attended the opening ceremony of the 2024 National Branding Exhibition
- Feb. 23: Participated in a forum about the lived experience of workers dispatched to Germany
- Feb. 26-March 1: Attended a forum with compatriots in the Americas



750만 재외동포와 대한민국이 하나로 통하는 첫 번째 온라인 세상 코리아넷

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