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Window into Overseas Koreans



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The Korean language, the first Korean Wave, the eternal Korean Wave

The excitement of that time washes over me like a wave. Last October, the Los Angeles City Council declared Hangeul Day an official city holiday, and a statue of King Sejong the Great stood tall at Los Angeles City College (LACC), the first public college to do so. In addition, a high school in the Korean Education Center in Los Angeles (KECLA) service area became the 82nd high school to apply for a Korean language class, surprisingly without a single Korean student. Typically, Korean language classes are created at the request of Korean parents where there is a strong Korean community, but in this case, “non-Korean parents and students” had strongly expressed a desire for a Korean language class in the curriculum planning survey.

As the Education Center, we couldn't just clap our hands as one amazing thing after another happened. We organized a commemorative event for LA's First Hangeul Day at a local shopping mall. The response was overwhelming. We asked for everyone's name and carefully wrote their names in Korean on small canvases, such as “마이클” for “Michael.” We quickly ran out of 300 canvases.

As we wrote names, we naturally explained the meaning of Hangeul Day and talked about the Korean Wave, including K-pop and K-dramas. Feeling the power of the so-called hottest letter in the world, K, my shoulders squared up and my chest felt like a fireball. At that moment, Audrey Levian, a high school student in Los Angeles, looked at her Korean name and exclaimed, “This is not writing; this is art.” Even considering that it came from a country where expressions are expansive, the emotion traveled across the air to move everyone.

On my way back to the office, I stood in front of a panel in the hallway of the institute that featured tributes to Hangeul by great minds. James McCauley, John Mann, Jeffrey Sampson and others whose names I recognized. I stood in front of the panel for a while, looking at Pearl Buck, who was famous for her love of Hangeul. She also had a Korean name, Jinju Park, in the 1960s. I remembered her phrase that Hangeul is “the simplest and most brilliant script in the world.”

To summarize, it was something along the lines of “Hangeul is the most original, systematic, scientific, and beautiful alphabet that



By Kang Jeon-hoon,
director of the Korean Education Center in
Los Angeles (KECLA)

mankind could ever dream of.” In the moment, the tributes read like a bunch of likes and positive comments on a K-pop idol's social media. Hangeul has been a Korean Wave for a very long time, at least for linguists on this planet. I like to think of it as the very first Korean Wave.

Starting with K-pop, the Korean Wave has been sweeping the world since the 2000s. Korean movies and dramas are among the first content consumed on OTT, and this global love affair with Korean culture has lasted longer than expected, which has some people worried: That it's not as good as it used to be, and that it's going to fizzle out someday.

I'm a consumer but not an expert in this space, so I don't want to give an opinion. But I will say this. What I argue (and I hope I'm not alone in this) is that if you look back at the first Korean Wave to the current one, there is one thing that stands out. Just as waves create sandbars. It is the world's distinct appetite for learning the charismatic Korean language. People sing along to K-pop, get hooked on K-dramas, get curious about Korean food and the cities where the dramas are set, become eager to travel to Korea and eventually study the language.

Ten years ago, there were 49 regular schools in Los Angeles that offered Korean language classes, and now there are 83 schools with nearly 9,000 students learning Korean. That's almost double the number of students learning Korean as a regular school subject. In addition, there are nearly 400 people taking the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) in LA alone, 60 percent of whom are non-Koreans, many of whom are preparing for the test with dreams of studying at a Korean university. It's a “special phenomenon” in the U.S., a country where many different races and languages coexist.

The Korean Wave may get bigger and smaller, but amid the rise and fall of these waves, the first Korean Wave, which is Hangeul, will leave a vital trace like a distinct sandbar. The dynamism of the Korean people's 5,000-year history, the delicate, subtle and high-minded culture, and the warm, deep and thoughtful people will surely leave their mark. Language is the foundation of civilization and therefore cannot easily disappear. If so, the results will be as expected. Hangeul, with its great characters and charm, was the first Korean Wave, and it will be eternal. ☺



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‘I will show you a different Overseas Koreans Agency’

Inauguration ceremony emphasizes ‘open communication for mutual growth with Korean community’



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk emphasizes in his inaugural speech that he will “strive to expand the collective capabilities of the Korean people.”

At his inauguration ceremony on July 31, Lee Sang-duk, the new commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, presented his vision to create an environment where Korea and the Korean diaspora can develop together and contribute to the common prosperity of mankind and world peace. To this end, he said he will always open and communicate with overseas Koreans and the Korean people based on empathy.

“As the head of the OKA, which was launched by the Yoon Suk Yeol government in June last year in response to the long-standing wishes of overseas Koreans, I will strive to realize the national task of building a global Korean community,” Lee said at his inauguration ceremony at the OKA headquarters in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon.

In particular, as the agency is a new organization with employees from diverse backgrounds, he emphasized that he will lead the establishment of an organizational culture of a united team and lead the way to serve the Korean compatriot community with conviction as a public servant.

“We will strive to expand the collective capabilities of the Korean diaspora, reflecting its growth into a valuable overseas capacity that can provide assistance and support to the Republic of Korea.”

Lee is a career diplomat who has served in various capacities, including ambassador to Indonesia and Singapore, director of the Northeast Asia Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and minister counselor to China.

The following is a summary of Lee's inaugural remarks.

In June last year, the Yoon Suk Yeol government responded to the long-standing wishes of overseas Koreans to launch the Overseas Koreans Agency, and I am honored to be working with you all to realize the national task of "building a global Korean community." Despite the short period of time since its inauguration, the OKA has established a Basic Plan for Overseas Korean Policy and prepared an implementation plan, forming the basis for systematizing overseas Korean policy.

We have also expanded the scope of overseas Korean policies by establishing policies for atomic bomb victims, "padok" workers dispatched to Germany, Sakhalin, Koryo compatriots and adopted Korean compatriots. We have also spared no effort to strengthen the identity of overseas Koreans by supporting Hangeul schools and strengthening training for Hangeul school teachers. We have also successfully held the World Korean Business Congress and the World Korean Association Presidents' Congress, further strengthening the global Korean network.

Recently, we have also achieved a breakthrough in introducing an identity verification system for overseas Koreans. While the OKA has done a lot in the past year, I know that there are still many challenges ahead.

Although the OKA has been established, in some regions of the world, the relationship between overseas Koreans and their countries of residence still needs more attention and consideration, and I will continue to gather wisdom on these issues in a way that resonates with overseas Koreans.

As a new organization, the OKA has inevitably gathered members with diverse backgrounds, but internally we need to establish a one-team organizational culture and system as soon as possible. If the OKA aims to "build a global Korean community," it will be necessary for the agency itself to have the organizational culture and capacity to fulfill such a task.

Above all, I ask you to stay true to the public service value that we, as members of a government body, are dedicated to serving the country and its people. Without belief and pride in public service, it will be difficult to bear this kind of duty in the long term. Armed with these public service values, I hope that we will develop the habit of thinking creatively and imaginatively, and performing our work efficiently. I hope that we will move away from doing things for the sake of doing things.

Finally, there is something that I have felt very keenly in the field recently. It is that the diaspora community is no longer a dependent variable of the home country. According to official records, our diaspora began in 1902, when 121 sugarcane workers from Jemulpo Port left for Hawaii.

However, the diaspora of the Korean people has a long history before that, such as the diaspora of Goguryeo and Baekje, and the migration to Manchuria and Sakhalin during the Japanese occupation. As a painful part of our history lies behind the formation of the overseas Korean community, it would not be an exaggeration to say that our overseas Korean policy since the establishment of the Republic of Korea's government has long focused on the ethnic and emotional ties between the overseas Korean community



Lee Sang-duk, the new commissioner of the OKA, delivers his inaugural speech at his swearing-in ceremony on July 31.

and the home country.

But today's diaspora is not what it used to be. They have grown into a valuable overseas force that can help each other economically and provide support to their home countries. In the U.S. and other countries around the world, they are actively entering mainstream society, and in Indonesia, where I worked, I was able to witness many of them overcome initial difficulties, achieve economic success and grow into valuable assets of Korea.

Our government should strive to ensure that this change in the status of the overseas Korean community leads to the expansion of the collective capabilities of the Korean people around the world. This is why the Yoon Suk Yeol administration established the OKA.

We are facing so-called simultaneous and complex global challenges. If the overseas Korean community and the home country are willing to put their heads together and think hard about these challenges, we will be able to find a new path forward. I will continue to listen to the voices on the ground and strive to fulfill the expectations of the 7.5 million overseas Koreans. Thank you. 🙏



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers a eulogy at a memorial service in front of a monument to Korean atomic bomb victims at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 5.

‘Gov’t will never forget pain of Hiroshima’

Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers eulogy at Hiroshima Korean Atomic Bomb Victims Memorial Service

A memorial service to commemorate the Korean victims of the atomic bombings during World War II was held Aug. 5 in Hiroshima, Japan.

“I feel a heavy responsibility for the fact that our government has not been able to share the pain and suffering of the victims in the past, despite the history of war and discrimination,” said Lee Sang-duk, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, in a remembrance service held in front of the memorial monument to Korean atomic bomb victims at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

“We will spare no effort and support to the Korean

victims of the atomic bomb, as well as our compatriots who remain in Japan, to help them heal from the pain of the past, so that their descendants can move toward a bright future.”

“The Yoon Suk Yeol administration will never forget the pain of Hiroshima,” Lee added.

‘Every support to move forward for a brighter future’

“The government offers at the altar its firm resolve that it will strive to create a world of shared prosperity and lasting peace as a global pivotal nation so that the tragedy of 79 years ago will never be repeated,” he promised.

Held annually Aug. 5 since 1970, the memorial service is a signature event to commemorate the victims of the atomic bombing.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk lays a wreath during a memorial service for Korean atomic bomb victims at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 5.

The 55th memorial service held this year was attended by Lee and Korean Japanese compatriots, as well as Hiroshima Consul General Lim Si-heung; Kim Yi-joong, head of the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan); and Kim Ki-sung, head of the Hiroshima branch of Mindan.

From the Japanese side, more than 200 people visited the memorial, including Tetsuo Saito, the minister of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism; Rep. Akira Hirabayashi of the Komeito Party; Hiroshi Hiraguchi, the chairman of the Hiroshima Prefectural Association of the Liberal Democratic Party; and Eri Mikami of the Constitutional Democratic Party, as well as other officials and organizations related to the victims.

South Korea, Japan leaders visited memorial together last year during summit

This is the second time that the OKA commissioner has attended the memorial service on behalf of the government, with the first being last year.

During his visit to Hiroshima on the sidelines of the G7 last May, President Yoon met with more than 20 first-generation atomic bomb survivors and their descendants, and together with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, they laid a wreath at the Atomic Bomb Victims Memorial Monument for the first time in history.

“Our government will not turn a blind eye to our compatriots who suffered from the atomic bombing, and our sympathies will not stop here,” President Yoon said, and instructed then OKA Commissioner Lee Key-cheol to attend next year’s memorial service for Korean atomic bomb victims. It was a strong signal of the president’s commitment to the victims.

A month later, President Yoon invited 42 compatriots who were victims of

the atomic bombing of Hiroshima to visit their homeland for the Chuseok festival.

“It is meaningful that my first visit after taking office was to Hiroshima, and I will continue to strive for the rights and interests of compatriots and pay sustained attention to the overseas Korean community,” said Lee Sang-duk, who took office July 31.

Kim Hwa-ja, former vice chairwoman of the Hiroshima branch of the Korean Women’s Association, who visited the Blue House at the invitation of the president last year, was unable to attend the memorial service due to health issues, but her advice to think about the future rather than the past was not forgotten.

Japanese officials also honor the victims

“I still cry when I think of the friends and teachers I lost during the bombing,” said former Vice Chair Kim Hwa-ja, who was 4 years old at the time of the bombing. “There is almost no discrimination against Koreans in Hiroshima. I sincerely hope that there will be a world without war in the future.”

Meanwhile, an estimated 50,000 Koreans in Japan are believed to have been affected by the atomic bomb dropped by the U.S. military on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. 🇯🇵

‘We will promote policies that meet the needs of our compatriots’

Lee actively communicates with Korean Japanese compatriots in his first act in office

Before and after attending the Hiroshima Korean Atomic Bomb Victims Memorial Ceremony, Lee Sang-duk, the commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, actively communicated with the Korean community in Japan by meeting with compatriots and visiting local community sites.

Firstly, on Aug. 4, he hosted a meeting with 40 compatriots from Hiroshima, including the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan) and the Korean Association, at the Rihga Royal Hotel Hiroshima.

At the meeting, Kwon Jun-oh, chair of the Special Committee for Korean Atomic Bomb Victims, said, “I am grateful that the president invited compatriots who were victims of the atomic bomb to the Blue House last year, and I hope that the OKA commissioner will attend the memorial service again next year.”

“We still do not know the status of 17,000 of the 20,000 victims,” said Kim Ki-sung, head of Mindan’s Hiroshima headquarters. “I hope that the OKA will take the initiative to find out more about the current status of victims.”

Lee also traveled to Osaka on May 5 and 6 to meet with compatriots in the Kansai region, where the largest number of Korean Japanese live, and listen to their voices.

Holds meetings with compatriots and visiting civilian sites, listens to opinions of compatriot community

“We need the support of the Korean diaspora to continue to maintain and strengthen the friendship and cooperation between Japan and Korea, which has been achieved through the triumphant political determination of the Yoon Suk Yeol government,” Lee said at a dinner meeting with more than 50 Korean diaspora members of Mindan in the Kansai region.

In response, the Korean diaspora expressed their gratitude and support for the Yoon government’s efforts to restore bilateral ties, and said that it



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (R) visits Ikuno Korea Town, a place that has been a part of the history of the Korean diaspora in Japan, on Aug. 6, and actively listens to the voices of the Korean diaspora from their perspective.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk greets more than 50 Korean Japanese who are active in the Kansai region's Mindan and Korean Associations at a dinner meeting on Aug. 5.

is the turn of the Korean Japanese community to contribute to the continued development of friendship and cooperation between Japan and Korea.

In addition, Koreans in Japan made various requests to the OKA. Lee Hae-gwang, president of the Kansai Korean Association, asked for government funding for projects that would practically benefit the Korean community, more events that would bring together local diplomatic missions and compatriots, and support for Hangeul education.

Gong San-geun, president of the Mindan Kyoto Headquarters, said, "The biggest challenge for Mindan is to foster the next generation," and called for efforts to actively involve younger generations, including Korean students studying abroad in Japan, in Mindan.

"The number of people in the younger generations is decreasing," said Kwon Oh-in, president of the Mindan Shiga Headquarters. "I would like to ask you to actively invest in the education of the next generation."

In addition, Jung Byung-chaeh, deputy head of the Mindan Osaka Headquarters, said, "Please allow us to utilize support funding for Mindan for the operational costs of Mindan," and requested funding for emergency repairs for aging Mindan buildings.

"The Asuka area of Nara Prefecture has long been closely associated with Korean culture," said Kwon Young-hyo, vice president of the Nara headquarters. "I would like to ask for the support of the OKA for Korea-Japan friendship activities in the future."

Korean-Japanese community supports Yoon administration's restoration of Japan-Korea relations

"One year on from its launch, the OKA will do its best to actively listen to the voices in the field and promote policies that meet the needs of compatriots," Commissioner Lee said.

"Mindan will serve as the focal point in helping the Korean community in Japan move forward on the path of integration, while it is undergoing fundamental changes due to generational changes and an increase in the number of new residents and naturalized citizens, and I ask Mindan to support

the next generation of Korean compatriots to come to the forefront of the local community," he added.

In particular, on Aug. 6, the commissioner held a luncheon meeting with Hangeul school teachers, who are struggling on the front lines to foster the Korean identity among Koreans in Japan, in order to encourage their efforts and listen to their concerns.

At the luncheon meeting with teachers, Noh Gun-hee, a teacher at the Osaka Onnuri Hangeul School, said: "The demand for Hangeul education is increasing due to the spread of the Korean Wave. It is difficult to find Korean language teaching materials locally, so I hope that the government will create quality teaching materials that are tailored to the needs of teachers and the regions of Japan."

"With the support of the Korean government, the credibility of Hangeul schools is increasing, and the number of participating compatriots and excellent teachers is growing," said Lee Hwa-ja, principal of Ikomi Hangeul School. "We will work hard to create an educational environment that fosters the Korean identity."

In response, Commissioner Lee said: "Fostering the Korean identity among the next generation of overseas Koreans is a major policy goal of our agency, and Hangeul schools are playing a key role in achieving this goal. I am grateful for the efforts of the teachers who are leading the way in sacrifice and service despite the challenging environment."

Lee also visited Osaka's Ikuno Korea Town, the setting of Lee Min-jin's epic novel "Pachinko," to listen to the voices of Korean Japanese compatriots on the ground. [▶](#)



Participants pose for a photo after the opening ceremony of the 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum on Aug. 20, which brought together more than 100 Korean politicians from 14 countries, at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeouido, Seoul.

10th Global Korean Politicians Forum opens with great success

‘Gathering wisdom that leads to human co-prosperity and world peace’: OKA Commissioner Lee

The 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum, a gathering of former and current Korean politicians from around the world, kicked off Aug. 20 at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeouido, Seoul.

With the slogan “Our network is our net worth,” this year’s event was the largest to date. A total of 96 people from 14 countries participated. Participants included National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik, Foreign Affairs Minister Cho Tae-yul, Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, Rep. Na Kyung-won of the People Power Party, Rep. Seo Young-kyo and Lee Ki-heon of the Democratic Party, Chairman Chyung Dai-chul of the Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of Korea and Director Kim Young-geun of the Overseas Korean Cooperation Center.

Prior to the opening ceremony, Cho gave a special lecture on the government’s foreign policy, which aims to make Korea a global center of gravity, and called for “an opportunity to strengthen our identity and bonds as Koreans and to build friendship across national and cultural barriers.”

Noting that North Korea has recently “declared the Republic of Korea as the No. 1 enemy, denied its nationhood and reunification, and sought to fundamentally change inter-Korean relations,” Cho said, “North Korea’s behavior of denying one nation is especially heartbreaking for the many overseas Koreans who have deep ties to the land of the North.”

“The recent announcement of the ‘8·15 Unification Doctrine’ by President Yoon Suk Yeol was made against this backdrop,” he said. “It is meaningful in that it extends freedom, the fundamental value that runs through the growth and prosperity of Korea, to the North. I urge all overseas Koreans to take special care to prevent the spread of the false perception that the ‘North and South are separate.’”



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers greetings at a welcome luncheon for participants of the 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeouido, Seoul, on Aug. 21.

96 participants from 14 countries, largest number ever

“The U.S.-ROK alliance and U.S.-Korea-Japan security cooperation should work together smoothly like two cogs in a wheel,” Cho said. “It is important for the two countries to wisely overcome current issues stemming from their past history with a supportive attitude.”

In her opening remarks, Yeonah Martin, president of the Global Korean Politicians Council, said, “It is important to build networks through this forum and empower you to serve as a bridge between Korea and your respective countries.”

In his congratulatory remarks, Woo said: “Korean politicians have served as a strong bridge between their countries of residence and the Republic of Korea. I hope that political activities in your countries of residence and the diplomatic activities of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea will be closely cooperative.”

In his congratulatory remarks, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said: “We look forward to gathering wisdom for win-win development between Korea and the overseas Korean community, which will lead to human co-prosperity and world peace. The OKA will do its best to ensure that the change in the status of the Korean community due to its growing political power will lead to the expansion of the collective capabilities of Korean people around the world.”

In contrast to previous years, this year’s event had more than 50 percent of participants under the age of 45, including U.S. Rep. Daniel Bae of Oklahoma (29, third term), Kim Ernest of the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (27) and Yannick Shetty of the New Austria Party (29), who is the youngest member of the Federal Assembly in Austria. There were also a number of parliamentary aides from various countries, including officers of the Korean Aides Association of Los Angeles, which was officially established this year.

After the opening ceremony, the participants concluded the first day with a welcome dinner hosted by National Assembly Speaker Woo.


OKA Commissioner Lee: ‘We will actively help Korean politicians to enter mainstream society in their countries of residence’

On the second day of the event, participants shared the challenges and opportunities of Korean politicians in a panel discussion chaired by Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke of Hawaii, Nevada Supreme Court Justice Patricia Lee, Rancho Palos Verdes City Councilmember Seo Hyun-woo and Almaty City (Kazakhstan) Councilor Cho Elena.

In addition, mentoring sessions were held with students studying in Korea who were invited to attend by the OKA. Afterwards, the forum’s achievements over the past 10 years were reviewed, and a vision for the future was presented. Domestic experts were invited to discuss the four themes: peace and security, history and heritage, welfare, and education and culture.

“In recent years, the movement to enter the mainstream society of the country of residence has become active not only in North America but also in other regions, such as Southeast Asia,” Lee said in his remarks at the luncheon.

“These small and large-scale movements by Korean politicians will bring the Korean community closer to the society of the country of residence and contribute greatly to the development of the homeland of the Republic of Korea,” he said. “As the Overseas Koreans Agency, we will do everything possible to help Korean politicians enter the mainstream of their respective countries.”

On the third day, participants visited historical, cultural and industrial sites. They toured the ROKS Cheonan Memorial, LG Innovation Gallery and the Seoul K-medi Center. 

Vice Chair Cho Elena of Almaty City Council in Kazakhstan, third generation of Koryo descent

‘I will build IT sports infrastructure’

“In the former Soviet Union, only the children of wealthy families were allowed to play sports, but the world has changed. I want to establish a sports institution that provides opportunities regardless of income.”

“I want to use my expertise as a sports administrator in the political sphere,” Cho Elena (49), vice chair of the Almaty City Council in Kazakhstan, told Yonhap News Agency at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, on Aug. 20.

She recently visited South Korea to attend the 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum, organized by the Overseas Korean Cooperation Center under the Overseas Koreans Agency.

“We will build an infrastructure of sports facilities based on IT,” said Cho, who is a representative of the Almaty City Council and also the head of the Almaty City Sports Facilities Management Department. “We are also considering creating a training center for coaches who support athletes.”

The city of Almaty is building a number of facilities to promote sports under her leadership. The Almaty Arena, a 23,000-capacity sports center, is being renovated to accommodate more than 30,000 people, and next year the city plans to open an ice rink and swimming pool.

After studying law at university, she began her professional career as the head of the Olympic Training Center, where she ran several sports programs. She also worked as a senior marketing specialist for the Kazakhstan Olympic Committee, a consultant for the Kazakhstan Paralympic Committee and the director of the Akbulak Olympic Center, among other Olympic projects.

In March 2023, she was elected to the Almaty City Council for a five-year term as a proportional representative of Kazakhstan’s ruling Amanat Party. She is also interested in building the infrastructure for winter sports and has been the head of the Kazakhstan Figure Skating Association since last year. “I want to expand the country’s presence on the international figure skating stage,” she said.


A third-generation Koryo, Cho currently serves on the board of the Koryo Association of Kazakhstan. Her grandparents were forced to move from the Soviet Far East to Kazakhstan in the winter of 1937. Her grandmother told her about the forced migration as a



Cho Elena, a third-generation Koryo, vice chair of the Almaty City Council in Kazakhstan.

child, and she went on to study it independently, so she is familiar with the sad history, she says, pausing several times during the interview to wipe away tears.

“Some young women who were forced to travel by train due to the Soviet Union’s forced migration policy died because they couldn’t urinate properly,” she explained. “We still don’t know exactly how many of the 100,000 Koreans who came to Kazakhstan at that time survived. Some of us survived in a strange land, and we are here because of our ancestors, who did their best they could for their descendants. I am a Korean who does not forget history.”

At the forum on Aug. 21, she spoke on the topic of “Challenges Facing Korean Politicians in Kazakhstan” to overseas Korean scholars studying in the country. 

Third-generation Korean Austrian MP and first Asian to seek reelection in Sept.

Yannick Shetty: ‘Challenge and strive for your big dreams and hopes’

“Challenge and strive for your big dreams and hopes. When you fall down, you become stronger, and your dreams come true.”

“I will not forget my beginnings and will maintain a humble attitude. I am determined to succeed in the elections in September and raise the pride of Koreans by being reelected,” said Yannick Shetty (29), the first and youngest Asian to be elected to the Austrian Federal Parliament, when he met with reporters at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, on Aug. 21.

He was in Korea recently to attend the 10th Global Korean Politicians Forum, organized by the Overseas Korean Cooperation Center under the Overseas Koreans Agency.

Shetty was born in 1995 to an Indian father and a Korean Austrian mother who was a doctor. His maternal grandfather was born in Daegu and immigrated to Austria through Manchuria during the Japanese occupation. His grandfather, who was a professor of Japanese at the University of Vienna, taught comparative literature and promoted Korean literature, contributing to the establishment of Korean studies as a regular department at the University of Vienna. “The Korean Wave has raised the image of Korea, and nowadays there are so many students applying for Korean studies,” he said.

He was drawn to politics early on. After graduating from high school in 2012, he joined the New Austrian Party (NEOS), a youth movement for reform and change. While volunteering as a paramedic for the Austrian Red Cross that year, he studied hard and went on to study law at the University of Vienna.

The following year, he became an executive member of JUNOS, the party’s student organization, and supported the general election. In 2016, he became the Federal Chairman of JUNOS, and in 2019, at the age of 24, he was elected to the National Council. As an aspiring lawyer, he continued his studies during his parliamentary career and completed his master’s program at the University of Vienna’s School of Law in 2021.

In explaining the secret to his election success, he began with his slogan, “‘A lawyer for young people’ appealed to the curiosity of young Koreans and garnered support from voters who wanted change.”




“I will not forget my roots and will repay the voters who elected me with even more humility,” Yannick Shetty, a member of the Austrian parliament, tells reporters at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul in Yeouido, Seoul, on Aug. 21.

He said he plans to run on a change-oriented campaign strategy in the September general election, promising pension reform.

“Through this Global Korean Politicians Forum, I am excited to share my achievements with Korean politicians from around the world, who all have a common story,” said Shetty, adding he hopes to take a lot of energy from the forum.

He is also diligently involved in the Korean community in Austria.

“I am trying to be a bridge between Korea and Austria by doing things such as helping the Hangeul schools in Vienna by arranging a venue for the school,” he said. “We will use this forum as an opportunity to build bridges even more broadly in the future.”

Shetty also works closely with the Korean Embassy in Austria, he said, noting that he recently met with the ambassador to discuss organizing a traditional Korean food and Austrian wine festival at the parliament building after the general election. 

Korean Kyoto International High School wins Japan's Koshien for first time

‘The East Sea’ Korean language school song broadcast nationwide on NHK

Kyoto International High School (Kyoto Kokusai), a school for Koreans in Japan, has pulled off a miracle by winning the Japanese National High School Baseball Championship, also known as the Summer Koshien, for the first time.

Kyoto Kokusai defeated Tokyo's Kanto Daiichi High School 2-1 in extra innings in the finals of the 106th Summer Koshien at Hanshin Koshien Stadium in Nishinomiya, Hyogo Prefecture, on Aug. 23.

Kyoto Kokusai became the team to win the Summer Koshien on the 100th anniversary of the construction of Hanshin Koshien Stadium and became the first team from Kyoto Prefecture to win the championship in 68 years.

The game was a tight pitcher's duel from the first inning onward, with a streak of scoreless innings. Kyoto Kokusai had runners on second and third in the top of the fifth inning and first and third in the top of the sixth inning but was unable to capitalize. Kanto Daiichi also had two outs and two on in the bottom of the sixth and two out and two on in the bottom of the seventh, but the runners were retired on grounders.

Kyoto Kokusai and Kanto Daiichi each had a lead batter on base in the ninth inning, but neither team was able to capitalize. Kyoto Kokusai scored two runs in the top of the 10th inning of extra innings with runners on first and second with no outs, combining a hit, a base on balls and a sacrifice fly. In the bottom of the 10th, reliever Ikki Nishimura held Kanto Daiichi to one run to seal the win.

2-1 victory in extra innings

The game was also broadcast live across Japan on public broadcaster NHK as the Kyoto Kokusai players sang a Korean-language school song beginning with “Across the East Sea, the land of Yamado (大和-Yamato) is a sacred dreamland of our ancestors.” The competing schools' anthems are played at Koshien, and



Students from Kyoto International High School (Kyoto Kokusai), a Korean school in Japan, celebrate in the stands after their school defeated Kanto Daiichi High School to win the Japan National High School Baseball Championship (Koshien) at Hanshin Koshien Stadium in Nishinomiya, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, on Aug. 23.

NHK broadcasts all the games.

Kyoto Kokusai head coach Noritsugu Komaki said in his victory interview: “I was impressed by the great players. I think it was the result of everyone attacking with a strong heart.”

Kyoto Kokusai won the first round of the tournament 7-3 and then went on to win three consecutive matches 4-0 from the second round to the quarterfinals.

In the semifinals on Nov. 21, the team came back from two runs down to defeat Aomori Yamada High School and punch their ticket to the final.

‘I’m in awe of the great players,’ says coach

Koshien is known as the “dream stage” for Japanese high school baseball players because of the difficulty of qualifying. This year, 3,715 schools (3,441 teams) from all over Japan entered the tournament, but only 49 made the cut. For Kyoto Kokusai, which founded its baseball team in 1999, to reach the top of the Summer Koshien is considered a miracle. The school is small, and its baseball team has only been around for about 20 years.

Kyoto Kokusai previously qualified for the inaugural Summer Koshien in



Players from Kyoto International High School (Kyoto Kokusai), a Korean school in Japan, rush to the mound after their 2-1 victory in the final of the National High School Baseball Championship (Summer Koshien) at Hanshin Koshen Stadium in Nishinomiya, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, on Aug. 23.

2021, reaching the quarterfinals before falling short of the final. In 2022, the school also qualified for the Summer Koshien but lost in the first round, and last year, the school did not advance.

Kyoto Kokusai, run by the Kyoto International Education Center, is a small Korean school with a combined enrollment of about 160 students in middle and high school. About 65 percent of the students are Japanese, and 30 percent are Korean. Kyoto Kokusai was founded in 1947 by a group of Korean Japanese who voluntarily raised money for Korean education and was formerly called the Kyoto Joseon Middle School.

‘A shining and inspiring gift to both Korea and Japan’: Korean ambassador to Japan

Kyoto Kokusai was authorized by the Korean government in 1958 and acquired its current name in 2003, when it was officially recognized as a school by the Japanese government. The school established a baseball club to recruit students and joined the Japan High School Baseball Federation in 1999. Currently, 61 of its 138 high school students are members of the baseball club.

In a congratulatory message released shortly after the match, South Korean Ambassador to Japan Park Chul-hee said: “Kyoto Kokusai, which symbolizes cooperation between Japan and South Korea, has given the people of both countries a brilliant impression that will be deeply cherished in their hearts by winning the tournament. I hope that Kyoto Kokusai will continue to create even more glorious history in the future, using the victory as a springboard.”

Meanwhile, Korean netizens who watched the game were thrilled with the outcome.

“Kyoto Kokusai is now an international school centered on Japanese students,” one netizen said. “The baseball team is almost entirely made up of Japanese baseball boys who came from all over because they love baseball. The Japanese baseball boys tried their best to go to Koshien from Korean schools and did not reject the Korean-language school anthem.” 🇰🇷

79th Liberation Day celebrations Organized by compatriot organizations around the world

U.S., Japan, Cuba, Mexico, among others
Korean ambassador to Japan, 'Liberation was fruit of struggle for freedom'

While the conflict over the appointment of Kim Hyung-seok as the head of the National Independence Memorial Museum in South Korea has led to the government and the Heritage of Korean Independence (Korean Liberation Association) holding separate ceremonies, overseas Korean organizations around the world have been celebrating the event.

On Aug. 15, the Korean American Association of Greater New York (KAAGNY) held a ceremony to celebrate the 79th anniversary of Liberation Day at the KAAGNY headquarters in Manhattan, co-hosted by the Consulate General of Korea in New York, the New York Chapter of the Korean Liberation Association and the New York branch of The Peaceful Unification Advisory Council.

The event, sponsored by the Ministry of Patriots Veterans Affairs, was attended by more than 150 people from Korean organizations, local politicians and Koreans living in New York.

"There have been many attempts to establish a national holiday, but each time they have failed due to the resistance of the entire nation," said Yoo Jin-hee, chair of the New York branch of the Korean Liberation Association.

Yoo read out the commemorative speech of Lee Jong-chan, chair of the Liberation Association of Korea, that "If our country was founded in 1948, it was an anti-constitutional act and a ploy to legitimize the strength of the Japanese Empire."

Consul General of New York Kim, 'Korea today is miracle among miracles'

"The liberation of Korea, the founding of the Republic of Korea and what Korea has achieved today is a miracle among miracles," said Consul General of New York Kim Eui-hwan in his remarks. "What we should really focus on through Liberation Day is to soberly analyze why we became a Japanese colony and to



Korean American Association of Greater New York (KAAGNY) President Kim Kwang-seok (L) and Lee Hae-kyung, daughter of Yi Kang (Prince Imperial UJ), pose for a photo after she was presented with an appreciation plaque at the 79th Liberation Day Celebration Ceremony held at the KAAGNY headquarters in Manhattan, New York City, on Aug. 15.

protect the prosperity of Korea, which is recognized as a miracle in the world."

"It's about making the liberal democratic market economy system that the United States has given us ever stronger to crush the communist forces in North Korea and the ultra-North Korean leftist forces inside South Korea who are hell-bent on destroying South Korea," Kim emphasized.

One observer at the ceremony said, "It pains me to see that the Korean community far away from their homeland is not much different from Koreans back at home, who are fighting each other on different sides on the occasion of Liberation Day."

Over 1,000 people attended ceremony organized by Korean Residents' Association of Japan (Mindan)

In Japan, 1,000 people attended a ceremony to commemorate the 79th Liberation Day, which was held on the morning of Aug. 15 at the main auditorium of the Itabashi Ward Cultural Center in Tokyo, Japan, and hosted



Consul General Kim Eui-hwan delivers a congratulatory speech at the 79th Liberation Day Celebration Ceremony co-hosted by the Consulate General of Korea in New York, the New York Chapter of the Korean Liberation Association and the New York Council of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council at the KAAGNY Headquarters in Manhattan, New York City, on the morning of Aug. 15.

by the Korean Residents' Association of Japan (Mindan), Japan's largest overseas Korean organization.

The event was attended by the new Korean Ambassador to Japan, Park Cheol-hee, who read President Yoon Suk Yeol's Liberation Day congratulatory remarks.

"As long as the system of division persists, our liberation will remain incomplete," Park read. "Only on the day when the entire Korean Peninsula is a free, democratic and unified country with the people as its owners will complete liberation be realized.

"From the time our sovereignty was stolen until today, our people have written a truly great history, and the fundamental value that runs through this great journey is freedom, and our liberation is the fruit of our struggle for freedom," he said.

"As we celebrate (Liberation Day) with our Korean compatriots, we express our sincere mourning for the countless patriotic heroes who laid down their lives for the sovereignty and independence of the Korean nation," Mindan President Kim Yi-joong said. "Let us work with a firm stance for the peaceful

reunification of our country, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and peace and well-being," he suggested.

"Next year marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea," Kim said, adding that the event should be used as an opportunity for Koreans to strengthen their resolve for a civilized friendship between the two countries.

After the first part of the ceremony, singer Tae Jin-ah performed "Companion" as the first song during the second part of the celebration to much applause.

Event also held in Cuba, organized by Peaceful Unification Advisory Council

The Caribbean island nation of Cuba, which established diplomatic relations with South Korea in February, also held a 79th Liberation Day event organized by the Central America-Caribbean Council of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC).

The event, held at the Iberostar Parque Central Hotel in Havana, Cuba, on Aug. 10, was attended by 160 people, including descendants of Koreans, advisers of the Central American and Caribbean Council of PUAC, members of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and Korean members, and the former vice chairman of the Council of the Americas of PUAC.

The event was also attended by Cuban dignitaries, including the father of Mario Aljugaray Rodriguez, the minister counselor of the Cuban Embassy in China, who was responsible for opening the Cuban Embassy in Korea.

The Central America-Caribbean Council of PUAC delivered clothing, "gochujang," "gochugaru" and speakers to the Cuban Korean Descendants Association and the Cuban Hangeul School. The Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Korean Association also donated various Korean food items.

The Central America-Caribbean Council also provided scholarships to students at the Hangeul school and to members of ARTCOR, a social and cultural project organization that promotes Korean culture by organizing K-pop events in Cuba.

Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs honors Kim Sung-jae and others for independence activism in Cuba

According to the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC), they packed Korean food and goods in

20 large suitcases, dubbed “immigration bags,” and even paid extra taxes at Cuban airport customs.

“Marta Lim and other Korean descendants said they were happy to see gochujang, which is hard to find in Cuba,” said one official, referring to the daughter of independence activist Lim Cheon-taek. “Next year, we should prepare even more gochujang and gochugaru.”

The first Korean immigrants arrived in Cuba in 1921. Currently, more than 1,100 Korean descendants live in Havana, Matanzas, Cardenas and Camaguey.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs will honor 121 people on the occasion of the 79th Liberation Day, including Dr. Kim Sung-jae (National Foundation Medal), who supported the independence movement in Cuba. Kim, a second-generation Cuban immigrant, was active in Cuba in the 1930s-1940s as the secretary of the Matanzas Provincial Association of the Korean National Association, the youth director of the Havana Provincial Association, and the compiler of the introduction to the Korean National Association of Cuba. He took the lead in uniting Koreans in Cuba to support the independence movement.

In addition to Kim, awards were also presented to Dr. Lee Jong-heon, who served as the chair of the Korean National Association of Cuba, and Dr. Kim Sang-joon, whose contributions to the independence movement in the Mexico and Cuba region were confirmed by an effort in February to investigate independence activists in the region, in line with the establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Mexico’s Association of Korean Descendants in Yucatan also celebrates holiday

The Association of Korean Descendants in Yucatan, Mexico, also held a commemorative event for the 79th anniversary of Liberation Day on Aug. 11 at the Palacio Real Espana, a commemorative venue in the city of Merida, Yucatan, with more than 500 Korean descendants and local officials in attendance.

Consul General Choi Jin-chul of the embassy in Mexico (Ambassador Heo Tae-wan) attended the ceremony on behalf of the embassy, recalling the meaning of liberation and paying tribute to the active commitment of Korean ancestors in Mexico to the liberation of Korea.

“Koreans who settled in the Yucatan state of Mexico have not forgotten their Korean culture and are carrying on their inheritance,” said Arturo Abreu, head of the International Cooperation Team at the Yucatan Ministry of Culture, who attended the event on behalf of the Yucatan state government. “They are contributing to the cultural exchanges between the two countries.”

The attendees were entertained by a variety of Korean cultural performances prepared by the Association of Korean Descendants, including “samulnori,” fan dances and K-Pop performances.

The Korean Embassy in Mexico has been working to preserve the identity and promote the rights and interests of Korean descendants, including ▲ Searching for descendants of Korean independence fighters, ▲ Supporting various celebrations, such as March 1 Independence Movement Day, Korean Day and Liberation Day, ▲ Remodeling the Mexican Immigration History Museum, and ▲ Promoting the Korean language and traditional Korean culture.

In particular, next year (2025) will mark the 120th anniversary of Korean immigration to Mexico, and we will be working with the Overseas Koreans Agency and the Department of Patriots and Veterans Affairs to organize events to commemorate the occasion, the embassy said. 🇰🇷



Participants pose for a photo during the 79th Liberation Day celebration organized by the Central American and Caribbean Council of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC) at a hotel in Havana, Cuba, on Aug. 10. (Courtesy of the Central American and Caribbean Council of PUAC)

Free legal services for permanently returning Sakhalin compatriots

Commissioner Lee: ‘We will provide practical help to our compatriots’

The Overseas Koreans Agency will provide free legal services to Sakhalin compatriots who were relocated to Sakhalin during the Japanese occupation and returned to Korea under the government’s Permanent Return Program.

Since its launch last year, the OKA oversees the Permanent Return and Settlement Support Project under the Special Law on Support for Sakhalin Compatriots.

The free legal services are for Sakhalin compatriots and their families who have permanently returned to Korea since the 1990s and settled in Korea.

Currently, more than 2,900 Sakhalin Koreans live in 25 cities across the country, including Ansan in Gyeonggi Province, Incheon, Asan in South Chungcheong Province and Wonju in Gangwon Province.

These compatriots have complained of problems, such as changing their personal information, including their name and date of birth, after acquiring Korean citizenship or not being able to connect family ties between parents and children due to a lack of relevant documents.

Especially for older compatriots who are not proficient in Korean, it is not easy for them to resolve their difficulties on their own, and the compatriot community has asked the government to provide practical support.

In-person counseling at 25 locations nationwide

In response, the OKA will provide free legal assistance and counseling with the law firm Duksu.

Those who wish to correct their family registry, prove their identity or apply for permission to change their name can apply through Duksu by Aug. 31.

In addition, compatriots who want to confirm their relations will be offered a genetic test at a discount of about 30 percent off the



Sakhalin compatriot Hwang Soon-nam returns to Korea in May. OKA Deputy Commissioner Choi Young-han (far L) offers support to the returning compatriot at the airport arrivals hall.

regular price.

In addition, legal counseling related to domestic settlement, such as nationality and immigration, will also be available. Those eligible must apply for counseling by Nov. 30 via phone, email or Google Form.

For those who find it difficult to receive advice via phone or email, the OKA will also support visits to 25 locations nationwide for compatriots to provide face-to-face counseling.

“We will endeavor to provide practical help not only to Sakhalin compatriots living in Korea but also to overseas Koreans around the world,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said.

In the meantime, for any questions about the free legal services, please inquire using the following contact information.

- Duksu Law Firm: Cho Young-kwan, attorney (010-8848-7828 / chobyun@gmail.com)
- Korean International Network (KIN): Choi Sang-gu, director (010-8149-2643)
- Russian (interpretation): Seo Dmitry (010-2831-6208) 🇷🇺



Huh Mi-mi, who won a silver medal in the women's 57-kilogram judo event and a bronze medal in the mixed team event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, takes a photo at the monument to her grandfather Heo Seok, an independence fighter, at Hwasu-ri in Gunwi-gun, Daegu, on Aug. 6.

Judoka Huh Mi-mi, 3rd-generation Korean in Japan 'I memorized national anthem in advance; I want to sing it at the next Olympics'

Lee Sang-duk, OKA commissioner, congratulates '7 million overseas Koreans'

Korean Japanese Huh Mi-mi (21, Gyeongbuk Sports Federation) stole the spotlight at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games when she won the silver medal in the women's 57kg category, giving South Korean judo its first medal at the event.

"I want to tell (my grandmother) that I have worked hard in judo until today and that I will continue to work hard," Heo said after the regretful end to the final.

"I'm disappointed, but I'm really happy to have made it to the final with the "taegeuk" symbol, which has been

my dream since I was a kid. I'm also very happy to have won a medal," she said with a smile.

Huh, who had memorized the words to the Korean national anthem in advance, said, "I'm sorry I couldn't sing it. I hope to sing it at the next Olympics. I'm happy to compete for Korea," she told Japanese reporters.

"I will be older (in four years), so I think my physical strength will be better. I'm confident that I can win a gold medal at the next Olympics," she said.

Huh took her third shido call of the day honorably. Huh was penalized for a disguised attack when she attempted a nage waza (throwing technique) 2:35 into the overtime period and regrettably lost the match on a foul.

It was a particularly disappointing moment since her opponent, Christa Deguchi (Canada), had also received a second caution about 50 seconds earlier, leaving her just one foul away from a penalty loss. The crowd in the stadium also booed the referee for calling the foul.

"I didn't realize it was a disguised attack, but it's part of the game, so I can't help it. Next time, I'll keep it in mind and try to do better," Huh said maturely.

Of her quarterfinal victory over her "nemesis" Lkhagvatogogiin Enkhriilen (Mongolia), she said, "I was nervous because I've lost every time, but it's great to win for the first time."

"It's part of the game," Huh said after a disappointing "foul" decision.

In the joint press area, Huh was held by Japanese reporters for longer than Korean reporters. Dozens of reporters were interested in her background as the fifth-generation descendant of independence activist Huh Seok (1857-1920) and bombarded her with questions.

"I feel really happy to be able to join the Korean national team and represent Korea (at the Olympics)," Huh said in Japanese.

When the Japanese press asked her about her decision to give up her Japanese citizenship in favor of South Korea at the official press conference, she replied, "(It) allowed me to compete with a lot of players I admire a lot. I'm very proud of it."

Her grandmother who helped her on her journey to Korea was special to her, and she thanked her again at the press conference.

"I chose Korea because my grandmother said she wanted me to go to the Olympics and win a gold medal for Korea. She'd been so good to me since I was a kid," she said. "I chose Korea because I've always trusted and followed my grandmother."

Huh's life was changed by her grandmother. When she passed away in 2021, she left her with the words, "I want you to compete for the Korean national team." She immediately joined the Gyeongbuk Sports Federation judo team and, the following year, began to compete internationally under the Korean flag.

"The fact that a third-generation Korean born and raised in Japan played with pride for the Korean national team at the Olympic Games has touched the hearts of Koreans not only in Korea but also of the 7 million overseas Koreans around the world," Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. "The OKA, along with the 7 million overseas Koreans, will continue to support Huh Mi-mi." 🇰🇷

Huh Mi-mi (L) competes against Canada's Christa Deguchi in the women's 57-kilogram judo final at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Arena Champs-Élysées in Paris, France, on July 29.



Coach Choi Young-seok leads Thailand to second consecutive taekwondo Olympic title

Thai taekwondo hero Panipak Wongpattanakit: 'I feel so happy and honored'



Head coach Choi Young-seok (L) and taekwondo practitioner Panipak Wongpattanakit from Thailand celebrate after she won the women's 49kg taekwondo final at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Grand Palais in Paris, France, on Aug. 7.

Wongpattanakit (R) performs a deep bow to Choi after defeating China's Guo Qing in the women's 49kg taekwondo final at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Grand Palais in Paris, France, on Aug. 7.

When Thailand won back-to-back gold medals in taekwondo at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games for the first time in the country's history, there was a person who was as much in the spotlight as the gold medalist. That person was overseas Korean Choi Young-seok, the Thai national taekwondo coach.

On Aug. 7, Thai taekwondo hero Panipak Wongpattanakit moved the crowd to tears when she ran to her South Korean coach Choi Young-seok to give him a deep bow after winning the gold medal in the women's 49-kilogram taekwondo event at the Grand Palais in Paris, France.

"Coach Choi Young-seok is Thai now, too, and we won the second gold medal together, so I feel very happy and honored," Wongpattanakit told the media after the match.

"I never thought that a student of mine would be able to win back-to-back Olympic titles, but I'm so happy that it happened today," Choi said.

"This is the spirit of taekwondo" was the unified voice of South Koreans who watched the scene on this day.

Initially, Wongpattanakit was reportedly considering retirement after winning a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics. It was Choi who played a key role in preventing her from retiring.

Wongpattanakit was persuaded to stay in the sport by Choi, who helped her develop into a world-class athlete, reaching the top of her game at Tokyo 2020 and winning Thailand's first Olympic gold medal. She went on to win gold in Paris and became a national hero in Thailand.

Choi has coached the Thai national team since 2002. Initially, he went to the Southeast Asian country on an eight-month contract, but the team won two silver medals at the Asian Games that year. They were the first medals in the history of Thai taekwondo.

When his contract was up, the athletes held onto their coach, and he has now been in charge of Thailand's taekwondo for 22 years. Wongpattanakit reportedly trained under Choi for 13 years. Since Choi's arrival, Thailand has grown into a taekwondo powerhouse, dominating the Asian Games and World Championships, and now even winning an Olympic gold medal.

Choi was so beloved by the Thai people that he was nicknamed "Tiger Choi." As well as being born in the Year of the Tiger, Choi is also known for his strict discipline and intense training regimen. He was recognized early on for his leadership, receiving the Best Coach Award from the Sports Journalists Association of Thailand in 2006 and a medal from the Thai royal family the same year. 장

Russia-CIS region Koryo youth: ‘Through OKA’s Understanding Korea Course we have understood our lineage’

‘We will help young people strengthen ties with their home country,’ Commissioner Lee

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) held the completion ceremony of the Understanding Korea Course on Tuesday at Gyeongin University’s Gyeonggi Campus in Anyang, Gyeonggi Province.

The course, which began July 22, was attended by 32 Koryo youth and young adults from eight countries, including Russia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

“Through the Understanding Korea Course, I learned more about my heritage and became proud that I have Korean blood in my veins,” said Daniel Orozakunov (21, Kyrgyzstan), a descendant of independence activist Choi Jae-hyung. “It has made me passionate to continue studying Korean when I return to Kyrgyzstan.”

Kyungin University of Education, the event’s co-organizer, organized a program for the participants that included Korean



Russian-CIS Koryo youth pose for a photo at the completion ceremony of the Understanding Korea Program.

language and history education, “gugak” and taekwondo, Korean cuisine and K-pop. The participants also visited the OKA, the Korea Arts Council, MBC, Korean folk villages, the palaces of Seoul and other sites of Korea’s advanced industries. After the completion ceremony, the participants traveled to Gangwon Province for two days and three nights to visit the East Sea and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) before

returning to their home countries on July 23.

“The OKA held the Understanding Korea Course to commemorate the 160th anniversary of the Koryo people’s migration this year,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. “We will continue to help Koryo youth and young adults strengthen their ties with Korea while expanding their understanding of their homeland.”

OKA & Mael Business Newspaper · MBN to help Korean SMEs and small businesses expand overseas

MOU to promote success of World Korean Business Congress from Oct. 22-24

The Overseas Koreans Agency and the Mael Business News Agency (MBN) have joined hands to promote the overseas expansion of Korean small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the headquarters of Maekyung Media Group in Jung-gu, Seoul, on Aug. 23 in the presence of Commissioner Lee Sang-duk and Chairman Jang Dae-hwan.

The MOU includes measures, such as providing a place for business networking between overseas Korean businessmen and Korean SMEs and small businesses globally, to support their overseas expansion. In particular, the Mael Business Newspaper



Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (R) and Chairman Jang Dae-hwan sign an MOU to support Korean businesses’ overseas expansions.

and MBN will actively promote the 22nd World Korean Business Congress (WKBC), which will be held Oct. 22-24 at Chonbuk National University in Jeonju, North Jeolla Province.

The two organizations have also agreed to maximize the promotion of the event to attract talented overseas Korean entrepreneurs from around the world and domestic SMEs and small business owners

to participate in the competition. The event, which will feature a corporate exhibition, one-to-one business matchmaking, startup competitions, seminars and more, is expected to attract more than 3,000 participants, including overseas Korean entrepreneurs, domestic SMEs and small business owners.



'I've always wanted to go back to my home country,' says Bae Geum-young, U.S. adoptee looking for her birth mother

Born Oct. 24, 1977, Bae: 'I always wondered why I was adopted as a child'

"I always wanted to go back to my home country, South Korea, and for a long time, I thought about whether I could find more information about my birth mother and maybe meet some of my birth family.

"As a child, I always wondered why I was adopted," said Abby Goodrich (Korean name: Bae Geum-young, 47), a Korean adopted to the U.S., in the account she sent on June 6 to the Adoptee Support Team at the Office for the Protection of Children's Rights, explaining the story of finding her roots.

According to her adoption records, Bae was born in Seoul on Oct. 24, 1977, and was adopted by a family in the United States in April of the following year through Holt Children's Welfare Society. She lived mostly in Arizona, where she graduated from college and worked as a graphic designer.



Bae Geum-young, a Korean American adoptee in the United States

"It was hard because I grew up in a predominantly white environment," she admitted. "I didn't have anyone who understood me, and I used to feel like I was not good enough."

To connect with other adoptees, Bae regularly participates in Korean American adoptee groups.

She first traveled to South Korea in 2011 to participate in an event organized by the International Korean Adoptee Association (IKAA), where she checked her adoption records with her adoption agency.

With the help of the local government, she was able to find her biological parents' names and their addresses at the time, but her father had already passed away and her mother was unreachable.

"My birth mother was young when I was born, so there is a possibility that we will meet again," Bae said.

Korean Literature Society of America honors author Sung Min-hee with this year's American Literature Award

'They Were the Heroes of Their Own Lives,' 'Choice for the Day,' and five other stories honored

The Korean Literature Society of America (President Oh Yeon-hee) announced that it has selected Sung Min-hee, a writer based in Orange County, near Los Angeles, as the winner of the 30th American Literature Award. The five selected winning works include "They Were the Heroes of Their Own Lives" and "Choice for the Day." This is the first time that essays, rather than poetry and fiction, have been honored.

"In the unique environment of an immigrant society, I wanted to express the Korean emotions flowing through my mind and body through the medium of literature," Sung said. "The experiences of immigrant life provide infinite resources for writing."

Hailing from Busan, Korea, she worked as a teacher before



Sung Min-hee, winner of the 30th American Literature Award

moving to Los Angeles in 1981. She appeared as an essayist in the "Age of Essays" (2006) and "Contemporary Essays" (2012), and as a novelist and critic in "Korean Novels" (2023) and "Essay Aesthetics" (2024), respectively. She received the 2018 Korean Prose Literature Award and has published numerous essay collections, including "People are Your Home" and "Love Still Shaking."

She has served as the president and chair of the American Essay Writers Association and a steering committee member of the American Essay Prize, and is currently serving as an auditor

for the Korean Writers Association of America, a board member of the American Essay Writers Association and the president of the Orange County chapter of a Korean poetry association.

Vietnamese women who migrated for marriage experience ‘mom’s country’ culture with their children

Co-organized by Hanoi Korean Association and Jecheon City Council’s Living Properly Movement

An event was held for Vietnamese women living in Korea to visit their motherland with their children and learn about its history, culture and language.

The Hanoi Korean Association in Vietnam (President Jang Eun-sook) hosted eight Korean Vietnamese multicultural families living in Jecheon, North Chungcheong Province, from April 4-15 for the “Know Your Mother’s Country Cultural Experience” event. The event, co-organized by the Hanoi Korean Association and the Jecheon City

Council of the Living Properly Movement, was designed to introduce Vietnam to the second generation of multicultural families in Korea and Vietnam.

The Hanoi Korea-Vietnam Family Association had been organizing the “Parents of Multicultural Families Invitation Project” to help parents living in Vietnam visit Korea to meet their daughters and grandchildren, but they realized that there was a need to educate the second generation of multicultural children.



Vietnamese Korean multicultural families participate in the “Know Your Mother’s Country Cultural Experience” in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The event consisted of a cultural lecture, a visit to the Korean Embassy in Vietnam, a tour of LG Electronics in Hai Phong City and a visit to the homes of the mothers’ parents.

“We hope that this will be an opportunity for the “Know Your Mother’s Country Movement” to expand to not only Vietnamese multicultural children in North Chungcheong Province but also multicultural children nationwide,” President Jang Eun-sook said. “We are also

considering expanding the program in cooperation with other Korean associations in Asia.”

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family also organized an event for the first time to invite children of marriage migrants who have returned to Vietnam due to divorce or widowhood to experience Korean culture. The ministry held the “Korea-Vietnam Multicultural Family Youth Invitation Camp” last Dec. 12-14 in Seoul and Gwacheon, Gyeonggi Province.

Japanese university students visit Korea for month to study Korean, experience ‘hanbok’ and tea ceremony

Kokushikan University professor Shin Kyung-ho, teacher for 25 years, says it plays ‘great role in understanding Korea’

Fifty-two East Asian studies majors from Kokushikan University in Tokyo, Japan, recently visited Korea for one month during the summer vacation period to study Korean language and experience Korean culture.

From April 4 to 28, the students participated in Chonnam National University’s International Summer School program, where they took Korean language classes and visited various places in Korea, including Gwangju, to understand Korean culture. On weekday mornings, the students took customized Korean classes according to their level, and in the afternoons, they went on field trips to experience “hanbok,” tea ceremonies, fan making and Korean



Students from Kokushikan University in Japan participate in Chonnam National University’s International Summer School program.

food.

Students from the Department of Japanese and Japanese Literature at Chonnam University also had a discussion on cultural differences between Japan and Korea. Shing Kyung-ho (61), a professor of Asian Studies at Kokushikan University, who

led the students on the visit, met with the media at a hotel in Jung-gu, Seoul, on Aug. 7 and said, “Korean training plays a big role in helping Japanese people understand Korea properly.”

He first led a study trip with six students to Korea’s Hanyang University in 1999, when he was a lecturer at Kokushikan University.

OKA Upcoming Events

Maeil Business Newspaper-MBN MOU signed (Aug. 23)
MOU with city of Incheon and 2024 World Korean Business Council (Aug. 29)
Announcement of winners of Overseas Korean Literature Prize (late September)
World Congress of Korean Association Presidents (early October)
Korean Business Congress (Oct. 22-24)

OKA Commissioner's Activities in August

Aug. 2: Meeting with Incheon Mayor Yoo Jeong-bok
4-6: Hiroshima atomic bomb victims' memorial service, Osaka compatriots' meeting, Hangeul school teachers' meeting, and visit to Ikuno Korea Town
7: Meeting with Kim Yi-jung, head of the central headquarters of the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan)
13: Attended plenary meeting of Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee

Aug. 14: Visit to Overseas Korean Cooperation Center
19: Ulchi Freedom Shield training
20: Opening Ceremony of World Korean Politicians Forum
21: Welcoming luncheon of World Korean Politicians Forum
23: Maeil Business Newspaper-MBN MOU signed
29: 2024 World Korean Business Forum
30: OKA Policy Advisory Committee held

OKA Announcements

Recruitment of Hangeul school teachers for 'Korean Language Teacher Training Program'

130 applicants to be selected: 80 for program at Digital Seoul Institute of Culture and Arts and 50 at Yonsei University

The Korean Education and Cultural Support Division of the Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) is recruiting applicants for the Korean Language Teacher Training Program in the second half of 2024 to enhance the professionalism of overseas Hangeul school teachers by providing them with the opportunity to participate in the "Korean Language Teacher Training Program" at Korean university-affiliated institutions.

A total of 130 participants will be selected, with 80 undergoing the program at the Digital Seoul Institute of Culture and Arts and 50 at Yonsei University. The application period is open until Sept. 20.

The OKA will provide 540,000 won for each individual, universities will provide between 240,000-270,000 won, and the Hangeul school teachers will need to provide 50,000 won themselves. Upon completion of the program, they will be eligible to take the nationally recognized Korean Language Teacher Qualification Examination (Level 3).

Applicants must be at least 20 years old and have either graduated from a vocational college or completed at least four semesters of university (four-year program).

Teachers working in Hangeul schools that are registered with diplomatic missions (excluding government employees on government assignment or leave of absence) will be given

priority. Among them, the selection priorities are as follows: The first priority is teachers who have at least three years of experience as a Hangeul school teacher and have completed a Hangeul school teacher certification course, the second priority is teachers who have at least three years of experience as a Hangeul school teacher (teachers with more experience) and the third priority is teachers who have completed a Hangeul school teacher certification course (teachers with more qualifications).

Applicants must submit their application to the appropriate overseas mission during the application period. The specific dates of the application period may vary depending on the mission, so please contact the mission.

The selection of applicants and the results will be announced on the OKA website in early October. Documents to be submitted include an application form, academic credentials, a certificate of employment at a Hangeul school, a written pledge, a personal information consent form and a certificate of completion of a Hangeul school teacher certification course (if applicable).

For more information, please refer to the announcement on the OKA website or contact the OKA's Education and Cultural Support Division by phone (+82-32-585-3208) or email (hongju3931@korea.kr).



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