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2024

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Window into Overseas Koreans



Special Article - Koryo residents enjoy festive atmosphere by playing 'yutnori' and having dinner together
Mid-Autumn Special Feature - Tracing the roots of adopted compatriots
Policy in Focus - 'Helping overseas compatriots settle in Korea will be our new agenda'
Overseas Koreans can receive civil advice anytime, anywhere, without separate app
Current Issues & Topics - 2024 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards



‘Roots of K-culture and fabric of our identity is Korean language’

The London Korean School in England, which opened in 1972, is celebrating its 52nd anniversary this year. Currently, there are 115 Hangeul schools in 26 countries across Europe (as of December 2020). Of these, 23 schools are in the United Kingdom. In particular, the London Korean School is the oldest and most established Hangeul school in Europe.

After graduating from Ewha Womans University in 1966 with a degree in education, I pursued a master’s degree at the University of London, starting in 1972, for three years on a national scholarship. While collecting data to compare the math skills of British and Korean children aged 6-13 for my dissertation, I ended up starting a Korean school for the children of expatriate Korean employees. I also had dreams and hopes for the children of first-generation immigrants. One could say my dreams and hopes for the children of first-generation immigrants to not forget their Korean culture and language led to the passion to build a Korean language school.

In September 1972, at the Notting Hill Gate Anglican Mission Center, which was then used as the Korean Community Center, the then Korean Association President Kim Sung-eung, professor Chung Jong-hwa, Korean Consul General in the U.K. Kwon In-hyuk and the U.K. correspondent of the Dong-A Ilbo Kim Sung-yeol started the Korea in U.K. Children’s School, the predecessor of the London Korean School.

The school started with nine students and gradually grew to 330 students today. At the time, there were three teachers that included Koreans studying abroad. All of them were unpaid volunteers. The goal of the school was “to help the children understand the differences between the U.K. and Korea and to help them adapt to local schools.”

In 1991, I started another Korean language school in Oxford, which was opened by then Ambassador Lee Hong-koo (former prime minister). Again, everything was run by unpaid volunteers. After 10 years as a research professor at Oxford University, I was admitted as a permanent fellow (congregation), and after my retirement, I became a member of the Lifetime Honorary Professors (convocation). I am grateful to have been able to lay down one of the bricks in the great house of education.




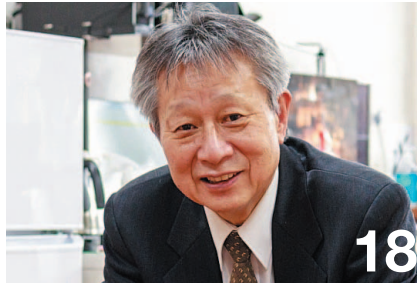
Dr. Miriam Chung,
emeritus professor, University of Oxford (founder of London Korean School)

If I had one wish for Korean School teachers, it would be to teach students to compare and analyze the differences between their country and Korea. It would be interesting to start with very easy and everyday topics and gradually upgrade to more difficult and challenging concepts. This will help us to think about our precious values in a positive way. I would like them to develop the intellectual ability to analyze and apply things based on the subjects they have learned, rather than the knowledge itself.

Finally, at the 2024 Paris Olympics, South Korea ranked eighth in the world in the medal standings, surpassing European powerhouses Germany and Italy. We are a sports powerhouse, as well as a top 10 global economy.

Today’s proud nation owes much to the Korean Wave. In particular, at the root of K-culture, K-food and the Korean identity lies the Korean language. The Korean language is the beginning and end of the Korean Wave. Today, Hangeul schools in the United Kingdom are not only Korean language institutions that instill the Korean identity in the next generation of overseas Koreans living in the region, they also play a significant role as a foreign language education institution, where people from other cultures and locals come to learn Korean.

The Overseas Koreans Agency is celebrating its first anniversary. As the first Korean language school in Europe with a history of more than 50 years, we look forward to the interest and support of the OKA to ensure that the London Korean School will break away from freeloading and find its own home as befits Korea’s national character. 



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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>

Koryo residents enjoy festive atmosphere by playing 'yutnori' and having dinner together

Delivered encouraging items to Koryo residents at Jecheon City Overseas Korean Support Center; 'I hope you enjoy a happy holiday'

This year marks the 160th anniversary of the settlement of 13 Korean families in the village of Jishinhe (Rezanovo) in Primorsky Krai in Russia. A special ceremony was held at the Jecheon City Overseas Korean Support Center in Jecheon, North Chungcheong Province, at 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 12. Ahead of Chuseok (Hangawi), the largest national holiday, a harmony feast was held for the 2024 Chuseok Festival for Koryo compatriots who migrated to Jecheon from Central Asia.

Jecheon is the first local government in Korea to support the migration and resettlement of Korean compatriots in the era of depopulation and rural depopulation.

The event, which was co-hosted by Jecheon and the Jecheon City Overseas Korean Center, was attended by

more than 100 people, including OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, Jecheon Mayor Kim Chang-kyu, Daewon University President Kim Young-cheol and Koryo residents. The Koryo community enjoyed the folk game "yutnori" and then had dinner together to enjoy the holiday atmosphere.

Celebrating first and second births to Koryo immigrant couples in Jecheon

The highlight of the day was the celebration of the birth of two precious new lives to Koryo migrant families in Jecheon. The main characters were Miss Vangai Amelia, born to Vangai Evgeny and Chagai Natalia, and Miss Polay Elizaveta, born to Polay Olga and Polay Pavel. In total, three Koryo compatriot families who migrated to Jecheon gave birth, but the third family was unfortunately unable to attend because the baby was a newborn.

Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, along with Mayor Kim Chang-kyu and President Kim Young-cheol, congratulated the couple and delivered encouraging gifts.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk invites families who have given birth to children after settling in Jecheon to deliver congratulatory gifts and congratulate them on Sept. 12. From left to right: Daewon University President Kim Young-cheol, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk and Jecheon Mayor Kim Chang-gyu, as well as Vangai Evgeny and Chagai Natalia, and Polay Olga and Polay Pavel.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers greetings at the 2024 Korean Chuseok holiday unity event held at the Overseas Korean Support Center in Jecheon on Sept. 12.

In addition, the OKA will work closely with local governments that actively support overseas Korean migration, such as Jecheon, to promote win-win development between the home country and the Korean diaspora.

New mother Natalia: 'I am grateful to OKA commissioner'

"Koreans are polite and very kind," said Natalia Chagay, 25, a new mother who gave birth on June 6, adding especially that "I am grateful to Lee Sang-duk, the OKA commissioner, for coming from far away to congratulate me."

The couple is grateful that Chungbuk Province and the city of Jecheon recently decided to provide 10 million won (US\$7,500) in childbirth incentives.

"I want nothing more than for my baby to grow up healthy and happy in Korea," Natalia said. "I am also grateful to Jecheon for providing me with a place to live and a job."

She added that her husband, who worked at Iljin Global, an automotive parts company, quit his job to take a part-time job so that they could raise their baby together.

The Jecheon City Overseas Korean Support Center helps Koryo people who move to Jecheon find jobs at companies in the city and provides them with free room and board for four months. The center also provides education on the Korean language and the Korean culture. After the four-month protection period, Jecheon helps them leave the center and find new homes in the city.

"Korean is essential for settling in Korea, so I wish they would allow even a small number of people to receive Korean language education," said Lim Sergei (53), a former director at the Jecheon City Overseas Korean Support Center. "I would like to see more programs that provide education on language used in Korean workplaces and Korean organizational culture at work, as well as systematic education on laws and systems that are closely related to real life. I would also like to see the government ease the conditions for Korean citizenship for Koryo compatriots and also overseas Koreans."

"I wish the postpartum mothers, their families and their beautiful babies good health," Lee said, adding that creating an environment where overseas compatriots who have migrated to Korea can settle down stably could be one of the solutions to the problem of population decline and labor shortages.

There are currently 63 Koryo compatriots in 22 households who are staying at the Overseas Korean Support Center to adapt to life in Korea ahead of settling in Jecheon. Most of them are working, so the ceremony was held after work hours.

"Jecheon is actively providing short-term accommodation, Korean language and culture education, employment and housing linkages, and child care and medical support to help you settle down stably," said Jecheon Mayor Kim, encouraging compatriots to "put down their roots with a peace of mind."

Earlier, Commissioner Lee and Mayor Kim toured the Home Bakery, the Nata Supermarket and the Maria restaurant, which are community spaces for compatriots who have settled in Jecheon, and listened to their concerns.

With more than 870,000 overseas Koreans, including Koryo compatriots, living in South Korea, the OKA plans to strengthen its support for them.

To this end, starting in the second half of this year, the OKA will distribute the Guide to Supporting the Settlement of Overseas Compatriots in Korea to help them prepare for their initial settlement, as well as develop customized Korean language training programs to improve their Korean language skills.



OKA Commissioner Lee (L) poses for a photo with Valentina (C), a Koryo compatriot, after a tour of a Nata Supermarket run by Koryo people in Cheongjeon-dong, Jecheon, with Mayor Kim Chang-kyu to listen to the community's concerns.

Currently, Koryo compatriots live in Incheon, Ansan, Gwangju, Cheongju and Gyeongju. Unlike these areas where there are close-knit Koryo communities, Jecheon is characterized by the fact that the Koryo compatriots live together among Koreans. The idea is to provide an environment where they can assimilate into Korean culture quickly.

Since last year, Jecheon has been carrying out the Jecheon City Migration and Settlement Support Project for Koryo compatriots at home and abroad, and currently 172 people from 73 households have settled down, and 401 people are expected to become Jecheon citizens, including those who are about to migrate.

“We plan to increase the migration and settlement of Koryo people to 1,000 in the future and make Jecheon a center for Koryo residents,” Mayor Kim said.

**Gwangju Koryo Village begins operating Alley Tours Sept. 1
Historical and cultural experience; 1,600 people to be recruited by
end of Nov.**

Meanwhile, a tour package that explores the nooks and crannies of Gwangju's Koryo Village, which is steeped in the history of the Korean diaspora, began operating Sept. 1. On this day, Gwangju's Gwangsan-gu district and Gwangju Korean Village, a registered company, welcomed tourists who participated in the Gwangju Koryo Village Alley Tour.



OKA Commissioner Lee (L, front row) poses for a photo with Koryo compatriots at the 2024 Chuseok holiday unity event held at the Overseas Korean Support Center in Jecheon on

The Koryo Village Alley Tour is a tour package that utilizes the historical and cultural assets of the Koryo Village in Wolgok-dong, Gwangsan-gu, Gwangju, which has experienced the turbulence and hardship of modern history, including forced migration, the anti-colonial movement, the dissolution of the Soviet Union (USSR), returnees and the formation of a migrant society. It plans to recruit and serve a total of 1,600 people by the end of November.

Visitors can dress up in Central Asian costumes, decorate a “matryoshka” (a traditional Russian doll) and make “morkovcha,” a substitute for kimchi that was eaten in those faraway lands. There are also historical explanation events centered around the Wolgok Goguryeo Cultural Center, which houses more than 12,000 historical records and artifacts. There are four different tour courses for different groups, including families with children, student groups, adults and foreigners.

The cost is 9,900 won per person. It includes one meal of Central Asian cuisine, travel insurance and a gift certificate worth 5,000 won that can be used like cash at shops in the Koryo Village. Participants can apply for the program at the Wolgok Koryo-in Cultural Center’s website.

The Gwangsan-gu Council and the Koryo Village created the Alley Tour to promote the Koryo Village in Wolgok-dong as a historical tourist attraction. They plan to organize various travel products and events with the goal of attracting a cumulative 10 million tourists.

“We hope that visitors will experience Central Asian culture and Koryo history in Gwangju by walking, seeing and feeling the alleyways,” said Shin Jo-ya, head of the Koryo Village.



Chagal Nataliya (25), the first Koryo immigrant to give birth in Jecheon, is seen in this photo. “Koreans are polite and kind,” she told reporters. “I’m grateful to the OKA commissioner for traveling a long way to congratulate me on the birth of my baby.”

Since 2004, the Gwangju Koryo Village has been centered around Damoa Children’s Park (Hongbeomdo Park) in Wolgok 2-dong, Gwangsan-gu, Gwangju, and is home to more than 7,000 descendants of Koreans who returned from Central Asia. Some war refugees with ties to Gwangju are also residing there, including people who fled Ukraine after the Russian invasion in 2022. [창]

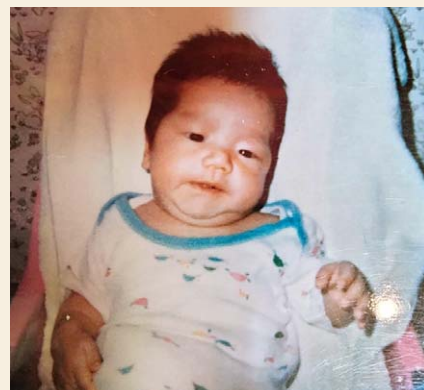


Koreans play “yutnori,” a folk game, at a unity event for the 2024 Chuseok holiday of the Korean diaspora in Jecheon, South Korea, on Sept. 12.

“ Since the adoption of war orphans began with the Korean War, about 200,000 children have been adopted overseas. South Korea once held the disgraceful honor of being the world’s largest exporter of orphans. However, since the introduction of a quota system in 2007 to limit the number of children adopted overseas, domestic and international adoptions have declined. South Korea is the only country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that sends children abroad for adoption. In 1983, KBS launched the world’s first and largest family reunification program, which became listed as a World Heritage Site. Sept. 17 is Hangawi, the largest Korean holiday. As a special event for Hangawi, the Overseas Koreans Agency organized a family reunion program to support adoptees in finding their roots. We continue to hope that next year’s Chuseok will be spent reunited with family. <Editor’s note> ”

‘I want to find my birth family before it’s too late,’ says Kang Soo-chang, Korean adoptee in U.S.

**Born July 9, 1985; ‘I keep thinking there is something I don’t know’
“I want to meet my birth parents before I get old, before it’s too late, and tell them that I’m doing well.”**



Kang as a child (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

Kang Soo-chang (R), a Korean adoptee to the United States, and his family (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

This is what Eric Reinhart (Korean name: Kang Soo-chang), a Korean adoptee from the United States, said in a find your roots story sent to the Adoptee Support Team of the National Center for the Rights of the Child (NCRC) on Sept. 5, adding, “I have a wife and a 6-month-old daughter.”

According to his adoption records, Kang was born at 7:13 p.m. on July 9, 1985, in Seongae Hospital in Jung-gu, Incheon. His birth mother, who could not afford to raise him, left the hospital with a request that he be adopted by a good family. Kang was then

referred to the Korea Social Welfare Association for adoption through the Myeongseongwon orphanage, and in November of the same year, he was adopted by a family in the United States.

“I have wanted to find my birth parents for a long time,” Kang explained. “I grew up being loved by my adoptive parents, but I always felt like there was something I didn’t know.

“I’ve always wondered if my birth family is curious about me and wants to find me, just as I am curious about them,” he said. “I want to know who I am and how my birth family is doing.”

Adopted Korean who runs Korean restaurant in Switzerland: 'I want to give my biological family a big hug'

Kim Young-hee, born Jan. 20, 1969, 'All three daughters are proud of their Korean heritage'



Swiss adoptee Kim Young-hee's husband and three daughters (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

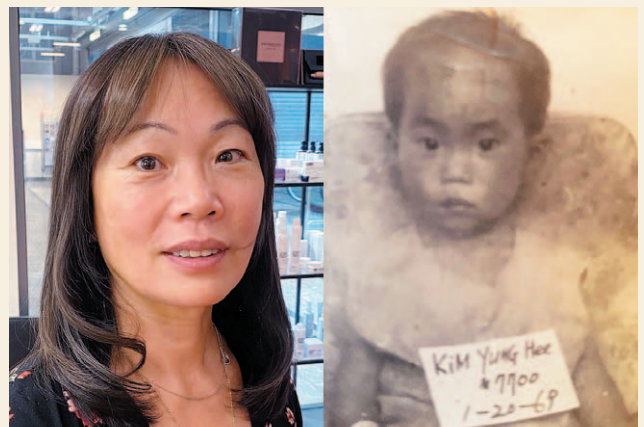
"I want to tell my birth parents, who must have made a difficult decision, that I am doing well. I want to hug them as hard as I can when I see them.

"I went through a difficult time with a heart attack, but I have recovered now," said Beatrice Aubert (Korean name: Kim Young-hee), 55, an adopted Korean who runs a Korean restaurant in Switzerland, in her find your roots story sent to the NCRC Adoptee Support Team on Sept. 4.

According to her adoption records, it appears she was born Jan. 20, 1969. On July 1 of the following year, she was found in a rice field in Haman-gun, Gyeongnam Province, and was taken to a nursery by the Haman-gun local council. She was then adopted by a Swiss family in March 1971 through the Holt Children's Services. Her physical characteristics include a 2-centimeter brown spot on his lower back.

After settling down in Switzerland, Kim married in 1993 and has three daughters. Her oldest daughter works as a sous chef for a famous Swiss chef.

"All of my daughters are proud of their Korean heritage and try to learn about Korea," Kim said. She first traveled to Korea in 1986 to



Kim as she is today (L) and as a child (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

search for her family and returned in 2009 to study Korean food at the Royal Food Institute.

In 2017, she founded a kimchi company, and in 2019, she and her husband, a chef, opened a restaurant that combines traditional Swiss and Korean cuisine.

French adoptee returns to her roots after 34 years: ‘I wish I could visit my mother’s grave’

Yoo Young-Ja, born June 15, 1972, ‘I want to meet other families in Korea’



A current photo of Yoo Young-Ja, a Korean adoptee in France (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)



Yoo and her family during a reunion in the summer of 1990 (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

“I will never see my mother again, but I would like to pay my respects at her grave.

“I want to meet my other biological family members in Korea,” said Marie Fleur Jeanent, 52, a Korean adoptee from France, in a find your roots story sent to the NCRC Adoptee Support Team on Sept. 20.

According to her adoption records, Yoo was born on June 15, 1972, in Icheon, Gyeonggi Province. Her biological father died suddenly when she was a baby, and her mother, who was struggling to make ends meet, took her back and forth between her home and an orphanage.

One day, Yoo pointed to a country on a calendar at home and said to her mother, “I want to go there,” prompting her mother to take her to an adoption agency, in the hope that her daughter could live in a better environment. In December 1978, Yu was adopted by a French family through Holt Children’s Services and grew up in a stable environment.

Yoo, who had struggled with her identity since childhood, first began searching for her birth family in the summer of 1990. Her adoptive parents, who worked for a major airline, often traveled to Korea and were in contact with Holt Children’s Services. It happened that her birth mother also

volunteered with the organization, so reuniting with her birth family was not as difficult as it is for other international adoptees.

Yoo met her birth mother, sister and brother that summer and stayed with them for two months, promising to keep in touch. But Yoo lost touch with the people who were supposed to help her and her birth family exchange letters, and the communication channel was lost.

“I met with my birth family and learned all about the adoption process and the situation at the time,” Yoo said. “I didn’t have any more questions, and I decided to focus on my current life, so we naturally lost contact.”

Time passed, and Yoo became a mother of three. As her children grew up, they became curious about their Korean family, and she returned to Korea last year, hoping to reunite with her birth family. But she was unable to find out more about them and was told that her birth mother had passed away.

“Under Korean adoption law, a party can only find their biological parents, not their siblings, even if both parents are deceased,” Yoo lamented. “I have no way to meet or find my sister and brother, who I already met 30 years ago and who know of each other’s existence.”

‘I would like to find my birth brother,’ a Swiss adoptee who lost contact after a family reunion

Jeong Hyun-wook, born May 27, 1967, ‘I want to find my birth mother’s grave and information about my birth father’



Jung Hyun-wook (1st from L), a Korean adoptee from Switzerland, with his sister Hye-kyung and twin brother Won-wook (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

“After a reunion with my birth family in Korea, we had been in touch for 20 years, but due to the language barrier and our busy lives, we lost contact. I would like to find my birth brother.

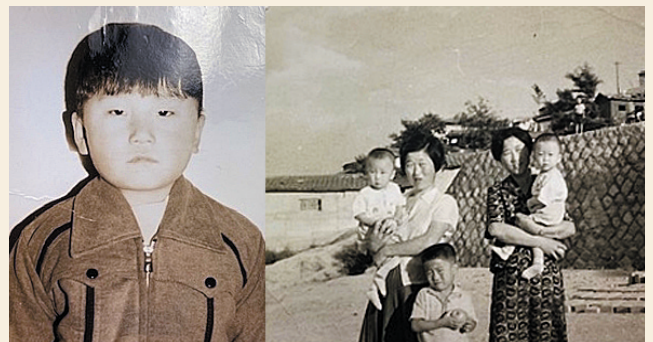
“My three siblings and I have always thought about my brother and wondered how he is doing,” said Vasilios Zanda (Korean name: Jung Hyun-wook, 57), a Swiss adoptee, in his find your roots story sent to the NCRC Adoptee Support Team of the Child Rights Protection Agency on Sept. 14.

According to adoption records, Jung is believed to have been born May 27, 1967. Six years later, in November 1973, he was adopted by a Swiss family through the Korean Social Service Society.

His birth mother gave up her three younger children for adoption after her husband suddenly passed away, and it became difficult to raise her four boys alone. In addition to Chung, his twin brother, Won-wook, was adopted by another family in Switzerland, and his sister, Hye-kyung, by a family in the United States.

It wasn’t until 1989 that Jung learned that Won-wook was living just 160 kilometers away, and after being reunited in Switzerland, the two traveled to the United States the following year to meet their paternal uncle. Through him, they were also reunited with Hye-kyung.

The three siblings then traveled to South Korea to reunite with



Jung as a child (Courtesy of the NCRC Adoptee Support Team)

their biological family, including their mother, their oldest brother Sung-wook, cousins and aunt. But their busy lives kept them out of touch. Their birth mother passed away, and they lost touch with the rest of their family. Jung returned to South Korea two years ago with his wife and children, but this time he was unable to reunite with his birth family.

“Under the adoption law, the parties can only find the birth parents, so there is no way to find my biological brother,” Jung said. “I want to meet him and ask him how my birth mother passed away and where she is buried, and I also want to hear about my biological father.” 장

‘Helping overseas compatriots settle in Korea will be our new agenda’

OKA Commissioner Lee expresses his position at first Overseas Koreans Policy Advisory Committee meeting



Lee Sang-duk (3rd from R) delivers remarks at the second plenary meeting of the OKA Policy Advisory Committee in the OKA building's main conference room on Aug. 30.

The Overseas Koreans Agency held its second plenary meeting of the OKA Policy Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Commissioner Lee Sang-duk in the main conference room on the 36th floor of the OKA building in Songdo, Incheon, on Aug. 30.

The meeting was attended by Kyungin University emeritus professor Park In-gi (committee chair), Chairman of K&K Trading in Vietnam Ko Sang-gu, Inha University professor Lee Jin-young, Yonhap News Agency's overseas Korean specialist reporter Kang Sung-cheol, Editor-in-Chief of the World Korea newspaper Choi Byeong-chun, Transitional Justice Working Group Chairman Lee Young-hwan and Next Generation committee member Shin Yeon-jeong, while members Kim Young-gil and Choi Mi-young, who are overseas Koreans living in the United States, participated virtually.

“As the number of overseas Koreans living in Korea is increasing and policy demands for social integration are emerging, settlement support for overseas Koreans is a new policy agenda that the OKA must consider and organize,” OKA Commissioner Lee said.

“The OKA is working in various ways to build a customized policy and total care system for Korean compatriots that is differentiated from immigration policies for foreigners,” he said, and sought the opinions of the committee members.


The advisory committee members expressed their strong agreement on the timeliness and importance of the policy to support the resettlement of Korean compatriots in a situation where

regional populations continue to decline, and expressed their willingness to faithfully fulfill their roles as advisory committee members to ensure that the projects promoted by the OKA achieve practical results.

In particular, Committee Chair Park suggested that as an important task of the policy to support the resettlement of Korean compatriots, the OKA should take the lead in designing customized educational programs, including language education, and effectively promote them in collaboration with local governments and educational institutions.

The committee members also emphasized the importance of promoting comprehensive and detailed policies that reflect the needs of the diverse nationalities and age range of compatriots residing in Korea, including restoring the Korean nationality, improving relevant laws and systems, and cooperating with local governments.

The members also emphasized that domestic compatriot policies can lead to tangible results if they are implemented in parallel with efforts to improve domestic public perceptions of Korean compatriots.

The OKA plans to continue to stably operate the OKA Policy Advisory Committee through regular communication so that the diverse experiences and expertise of the members can be reflected in the policy process. 

Overseas Koreans can receive civil advice anytime, anywhere, without separate app

365 Civil Service Call Center for Overseas Koreans launches data chat (webchat) citizen consultation service on Sept. 10



Overseas Koreans living abroad will now be able to receive easy and convenient consultation services via data chat (webchat) anytime, anywhere, without the need for a separate app.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) announced that the Overseas Korean 365 Citizen Call Center will begin offering webchat consultation services Sept. 10.

Since its launch on June 5, 2023, the OKA has been operating the 365 Civil Service Call Center for Overseas Koreans (02-6747-0404) to provide telephone advisory services in five languages 24/7, 365 days a year to overseas compatriots living in Korea and abroad, and since then has been striving to improve its services and expand its approach, including the introduction of KakaoTalk consultations (Jan. 19) and data call (web call) consultations (April 30).

In addition, it has now become possible for overseas Koreans who are in countries where KakaoTalk is restricted or have difficulty using KakaoTalk to use the web chat service, which can be easily used without a separate app as long as they have an internet

connection.

Now, the 365 Civil Service Call Center for Overseas Koreans has established consultation channels through the phone, KakaoTalk, web call and web chat.

The web chat can be accessed through the call center or the 365 Overseas Korean Portal homepage and is easy to use.

The call center will be able to provide more convenient civil service consultation services to overseas Koreans around the world through the establishment of diversified consultation channels, including the web chat service.

“The web chat service will be a customized service for compatriots who are not as comfortable with verbal consultations or who want to easily resolve simple inquiries,” said Kim Yeon-sik, director of the Overseas Korean Service Support Center, the main department in charge of the civil consultation service. “The center will continue to strive to provide civil services that overseas Koreans can experience no matter where they are in the world.”

Korea's only & largest 2024 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards

Representative Korean authors Gu Hyo-seo, Park Sang-woo, Lee Kyung-ja and Mun Tae-joon share their words

504 writers from 53 countries: 81 pct (225) more applicants and 84 pct (597) more entries than last year



The front cover of the Anthology of the 2023 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards

The Overseas Koreans Agency has announced the 2024 Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, which are open to overseas Koreans around the world, with an 81 percent (225) increase in the number of applicants and an 84 percent (597) increase in the number of entries compared with the previous year. A total of 1,304 entries were submitted by 504 writers from 53 countries. The number of entries and submissions increased by over 80 percent on-year, despite the fact that the number of awards was significantly reduced this year due to budget cuts.

Now in its 26th year, the literary awards have been held annually since 1999 to foster the Korean identity and enhance bonding and mutual understanding as one people by encouraging creative activities in Korean literature. This year's contest was held in the three categories of Poetry, Short Story and Essay/Memoir.

Results announced in late September

The winners of the Grand Prize (5 million won), Honorable Mention Prize (2.5 million won) and Runner Up Prize (1 million won) in each category will be announced at the end of September on the websites of the OKA (oka.go.kr), Korean Net (korean.net) and Sotong24 (sotong.go.kr). The winning works will be included and distributed in the anthology 2024 Window to Overseas Korean Literature. The judges are novelists Gu Hyo-seo, Park Sang-woo, Lee Kyung-ja, and poet Mun Tae-joon.

The OKA conducted a public verification of the nominees for the 2024 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Award in accordance with the Regulations on the Operation of Competitions by Administrative Organizations.

A total of 13 works nominated for the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards were subject to the verification. The nominees were ▲ "The House," "Moshi," "My Village Is Burning" and "Seaweed Root" in the Poetry category; ▲ "Go West," "Malbok's Summer," "I Will Be in Paradise" and "Palma de Mallorca" in the Short Story category; and ▲ "My Bucket List No. 1," "The Stars Make Me Dream," "A Nearby Heaven," "Fifth War in the Middle East" and "Linda, the Woman Next Door" in the Essay/Memoir category.

The full text of all the works can be viewed on the Sotong24 website (sotong.go.kr).

Link to the full works: <https://me2.do/GEXNaxS>

Gu Hyo-seo: 'Literature by overseas Koreans is passionate encounter with another me'



How did you feel about being a judge for the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards?

“The indescribable feeling when you hear Korean on the street in a foreign country, it’s an instantaneous surge of feeling that goes beyond happiness and is just instinctive. Reading the literary works of overseas Koreans is an intense encounter with the ‘other me’ that exists in another country, and I expected that the ‘Overseas Koreans Literary Awards’ would be a very practical opportunity for me as a Korean writer to explore the issue of ‘language’ that we share as Koreans. On the other hand, I believed that the works of overseas Koreans are like foreign correspondent reports, and their works can endlessly stimulate and enlarge the outskirts of perception of a Korean writer, deepening and broadening our perspective and view of the world.”

Is there anything special that distinguishes the Overseas Koreans Literature Awards from other literary competitions?

“Just like Korean literature and world literature, both the Annual Spring Literary Contests and the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards are linguistic products that are written freely in terms of form and content without any restrictions or limitations. However, while Korean literature is limited to works written in Korean, the Overseas Koreans Literary Award is more distinctive because it targets works written in Korean while living abroad. Even though they are still free to play with content and form, they are characterized by the fact that Korea, Koreans and Hangeul loom in the background of the works as if by fate.”

Park Sang-woo: 'May you unfold your talents toward a literature that is joyful, a literature for sharing'



What would you like to say to the writers participating in the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards?

“Literature is a great tool to improve your life, depending on how you use it. If you are only driven by the desire to become a famous author who sells a lot of books, it is very likely that literature will become a tool of painful self-torture. If you understand that all literature in the world is about human beings and their lives and you see its intrinsic value, it is an incomparable tool for enriching your life and communicating with others. Literature knows no borders, so I encourage you to use your talents to create literature that is enjoyable, informative, entertaining and for sharing.”

What’s different about this year’s Overseas Koreans Literary Awards?

“Since being elevated to work at the OKA, there

have been many changes in the management system, practical approach, public relations and judging panel organization. I feel very sad that the funding for the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards has been drastically cut, and it is operating at a limited scale at a time when K-culture is spreading around the world, and from the perspective of overseas Koreans, I think that consideration for their own compatriots should be a much higher priority than actively promoting K-culture overseas. Nevertheless, I was surprised to learn that the management of the Literary Awards has systematized its public relations system, and that this year’s entries increased by 84 percent compared with last year. I sincerely hope that by increasing governmental support in this area, overseas Koreans will not live as shadows of K-culture but will be able to live with pride as Koreans anywhere in the world.”

Lee Kyung-ja: 'It is something very special to write a literary work in your native language from the place you are living'



You've been a judge for the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards for many years. What do you think should happen with regards to the direction of the competition?

"Rather than being a one-time event, literature is something that is expressed through the tool of the written word and remains forever as long as the written word exists. There is something very special about it, something that you can take out and look at whenever you want and need it, but it does not get old like a photograph. That's the greatness of art expressed through letters."

What distinguishes the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards from other literary prizes?

"In the case of essays and life memoirs, there is a specificity to the subject matter, which reflects the reality of the particular life of an overseas

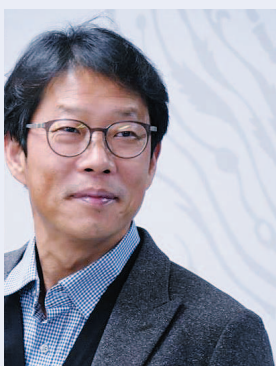
Korean. To reason and write in one's native language with literary quality from the scene of that life is something very special."

What are your hopes for the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards?

"Overseas Korean literature should reflect the particularities of people who have left the country of their birth and upbringing and are living elsewhere, speaking a different language and imbued with different customs.

"If it is also outstanding in its literary quality and touches the lives of people of other ethnicities or languages, then it is truly commendable. There are so many reasons to applaud the OKA's celebration of the mother tongue for overseas Koreans. Therefore, the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards are a national undertaking that deserve even greater recognition."

Mun Tae-joon: 'I hope Overseas Koreans Literary Awards can become a festival of solidarity and unity'



This year, you became the first winner of the inaugural Musan Cultural Award in the literary category. How do you feel?

"This year marks the 30th anniversary of my debut publication, and I think the award is an encouragement and a call to me to not be lazy in writing poetry, not to set my eyes elsewhere, and to broaden and deepen the scope of my poetry world. I will try my best to contribute even a little to the renewal of Korean poetry."

In your work, you've been exposed to poetry by poets from many different countries. Do you think there are characteristics of each country, and what are the characteristics of overseas Korean literature?

"Of course, each country's local customs and local flavors are reflected in the works, but I think there is an overall characteristic that is even clearer

than this. In the past, submissions were often based on nostalgia for the homeland and memories of the past, but now there are many works that have gradually moved away from that tendency and are actively expressing their daily life and poetic experiences in their current place of residence. The enthusiasm for creating and the quality of the works are also very high. If we were to translate these submissions back into the language of their country of residence and publish them in that country's poetry magazine, I think they would be very well received by readers of that country."

What are your hopes for the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards?

"I hope that more and more overseas compatriots around the world will continue to respond, and that the literary prize will become a celebration of solidarity and unity." 🇰🇷

‘Everything is in place for successful convention’

OKA Commissioner Lee visits Jeonju venue and others on Sept. 9, promises to ensure ‘smooth preparations’

Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk pledged full support for the 22nd World Korean Business Convention (WKBC), which will be held in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do (Jeonbuk) in October, including cooperation with the provincial government of Jeollabuk-do.

Lee inspected the event site on Sept. 9, 1 1/2 months ahead of the event.

The WKBC, now in its 22nd year, will be held at Jeonbuk National University from Oct. 22-24 and is the largest event for the overseas Korean business community, with more than 3,000 participants, including overseas Korean businesspeople operating both in Korea and abroad.

Lee inspected the Jeonbuk National University Stadium, where the corporate exhibition hall will be located; the Samsung Culture Center, which will house the opening ceremony; Jinsudang, where various programs will be held; and the indoor gymnasium, where the welcome dinner and closing ceremony will be hosted, to review the status of preparations and forthcoming implementation plans.

He also visited hotels to check the condition of the facilities and the availability of rooms in order to provide comfortable and safe accommodation services for the attending overseas Korean businesspeople.


In order to ensure smooth access for participants, the



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (2nd from L) receives a progress report on the World Korean Business Convention from relevant officials at Jeonbuk National University on Sept. 9.

commissioner also looked at transportation measures, such as shuttle buses along major routes and securing parking spaces, as well as safety management measures to prepare for various events.

“We are well prepared so I have high expectations,” Lee said. “I will continue to travel down frequently to work with the Jeonbuk provincial government to make sure the event goes smoothly.”

“As the convention is imminent, we are making efforts to prepare for a flawless event,” said Kim Jong-hoon, vice governor of economy for Jeonbuk Province. “The Jeonbuk government will flexibly cooperate with the OKA administration to lead a successful convention.” 

Overseas Koreans Agency’s Book Recommendations



150 years of painful history of the Koryo diaspora in Eurasia

Kim Ho-jun / Joo Ryu-sung

This book is a complete overview of the 150-year history of the half-million Koryo people scattered across the vast continent of Eurasia. Until now, Korean historians have never produced a “Kareisky history,” or a history of the Eurasian Koryo people. Rather than a historian, a journalist who served as editor-in-chief of the Seoul Shinmun and the Munhwa Ilbo was the first to take on the challenge of writing a complete history. In order to write this book, the journalist spent the last 10 years making around 10 research trips to Russia and Central Asia, interviewing officials and researching literature.

This book is an overview of the forgotten truths of history, starting with the migration of the Koryo people to Primorsky Krai in the 1860s and ending with their encounter with the “historical homeland” of Korea today. Based on the accumulated knowledge of Koryo society, this book synthesizes the research results of Korean historians and the author’s personal research to provide a comprehensive overview of the 150-year history of the Koryo people.



Park Kyung-soo, former principal of Kyoto International High School: 'Building bridges between Japan and Korea through baseball'

Korean school anthem beginning with 'East Sea' broadcast live across Japan on NHK



"Across the East Sea, the land of Yamado is the land where our blessed ancestors used to dream..."

This is how the school song of Kyoto International High School (Kyoto Kokusai), an ethnic Korean school that became the first foreign school to win the Japan National High School Baseball Tournament (Koshien), begins. The lyrics of Kyoto Kokusai's school anthem convey the idea that Korea and Japan have been interacting for thousands of years, and that our ancestors came to Japan and put down roots. The ethnic Korean school's Korean-language school song, which begins with Donghae (East Sea), rang out at the Koshien tournament, where every match was broadcast live across the country on NHK, Japan's public broadcaster. Local media also took a keen interest in Kyoto Kokusai's Koshien victory.

"Both coaches and players are encouraged," Park Kyung-soo, 64, the former principal of Kyoto Kokusai, told the media. "I dream of Korean and Japanese children playing together and building bridges between Japan and Korea through baseball.

"I had actually planned to change the school song to Japanese during my tenure," he said, confessing, "It was because I was concerned about student safety due to protests from some right-wing Japanese who were against the Korean school song."

Kyoto International Academy was founded in 1947 as Kyoto

Joseon Middle School, and in 1958, the school was approved for incorporation as Kyoto Korean Academy, with the high school opening in 1963. Following the Korean government's approval to establish a junior high school and high school, the school was officially authorized by the Japanese government in 2003.

The Kyoto Kokusai baseball team was founded in 1999, but most of the players were inexperienced in baseball, and the team was defeated 0-58 in its first practice game, making advancement to the Koshien a distant dream at the time.

However, through consistently improving its skills, Kyoto Kokusai's baseball team began reaching the top four of the regional tournament in 2016 and won the Spring 2019 regional tournament, making it one of Kyoto's best-known high school baseball teams.

The school's Korean school song has at times made it a target of attacks from Japan's right wing.

"The Korean school song is sometimes criticized by the Japanese right wing through websites and Twitter," Park said.

These comments argue that as the school is an official school authorized by the Japanese government, calling the Sea of Japan the East Sea is inappropriate.

The issue of how the East Sea is labeled by the international community has at times been a subject of diplomatic warfare between Japan and South Korea. For this reason, it is possible that the right-wing attacks will intensify when Kyoto Kokusai's school song is played at the Koshien competition, which will be broadcast live across Japan.

"It's been sung for 70 years," Park said. "If we can't sing the Korean school song, the very meaning of going to the national competition will fade. The alumni and the diaspora community want to sing the school song in our own language. Japanese students (who love K-pop) also think so."

Speaking at a special lecture to strengthen the capabilities of Grade 8 and below staff at Hanbat National University on Aug. 30, Park said he was proud of his students' hard work and tremendous success under difficult circumstances and advised them to "always carry out their work with positive thinking and strength in public life."

He began his civil service career in 1984 and worked his way up through the Ministry of Education, Consul General for Education at the Consulate General of Japan in Osaka and served as principal of Kyoto Kokusai from April 2017 to March of this year, laying the foundation for the school's Koshien victory. 🇯🇵

Andy Kim: ‘Trump-Kim Jong-un handshake is showmanship; practical strategy neede’

Likely to be first Korean American to be elected to U.S. Senate; attended meeting on fatal shooting of Korean American women

Democratic Rep. Andy Kim (N.J.), the first person of Korean descent to run for the U.S. Senate, devalued former President Donald Trump’s handshake with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un as “showmanship” and said that a practical strategy, such as strengthening the trilateral relationship among the U.S., South Korea and Japan, is needed for Korean Peninsula policy.

Kim made the remarks to reporters after a meeting with journalists on Sept. 6 regarding the case of a 26-year-old Korean American woman who was killed by a police shooting in Fort Lee, regarding U.S.-Korea relations and Korean Peninsula policy should Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris get elected.

“(If Vice President Harris is elected), the work will continue to push forward the trilateral efforts that we saw at the Camp David summit between the U.S., South Korea and Japan,” he said, “alongside expanding the U.S.-South Korea investment partnership in innovative technology and economics, which is also a priority interest for Vice President Harris. There needs to be an effort to have a practical strategy (in U.S. policy on the Korean Peninsula), not just showmanship for the camera like when President Trump and Kim Jong Un shook hands.

“During the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-South Korea alliance and the South Korean president’s state visit, Vice President Harris played an important role, and my colleagues and I focused on strengthening the U.S.-South Korea relationship with her,” Kim said. “This is in stark contrast to what Mr. Trump has done.”

As for the outlook for the U.S. presidential election in November, he was cautious, saying that while Harris’ approval ratings are ahead of Trump in various polls, “You can’t make any assumptions when it comes to U.S. politics.”

At the same time, he emphasized: “I have high hopes that a



new generation of leadership will emerge. Working with Vice President Harris has made me believe that she is the right person (for president). Mr. Trump, on the other hand, would be a disaster for the United States.”

Kim, a Democrat who has been elected to the House of Representatives for New Jersey three times, won the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate in the state’s June primary. New Jersey is considered a heavily Democratic state, with Democrats holding the U.S. Senate seat in the state for more than 50 years since 1972. As such, barring a major upset, Kim will win his election.

The press conference on this day was organized to share residents’ concerns and discuss measures to prevent a repeat of the July police shooting death of a Korean American woman in her twenties with bipolar disorder in Fort Lee, New Jersey, a heavily Korean American neighborhood.

As for the punishment of the officer who fired the shots, Kim said: “It’s too early to say because it’s an ongoing investigation. We will continue to monitor the progress.” 장

National Assembly World Korean Economic Forum: ‘We will support expansion of economic active territory’

Led by Rep. Kim Sung-won, 17 members of ruling and opposition parties participated in resolution, which included supporting World-OKTA



Participants pose for a photo at the launching ceremony of the World Korean Economic Forum parties at the National Assembly on Aug. 29.

The launching ceremony of the National Assembly World Korean Economic Forum, which supports Korean businesspeople around the world, was held at the first seminar room of the National Assembly building under the chairmanship of People Power Party Rep. Kim Sung-won.

The ceremony was attended by 14 National Assembly members of the People Power Party, including Rep. Joo Ho-young, who serves as an adviser to the forum, and Rep. Choi Hyung-doo who is acting as the head of research, as well as Policy Committee Chairman Kim Sang-hoon, Foreign and Unification Affairs Committee Chairman Kim Seok-ki, former Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Kim Tae-ho, and Reps. Bae Hyun-jin, Kim Sang-hoon and Park Soo-young. The Democratic Party of Korea was represented by members Cho Joong-sik, Kim Kyo-heung and Cho In-cheol.

Former Reps. Kim Jeong-hoon and Lee Won-wook, who served as the previous representatives, were also present, as well as An Kyung-ryul, president of the Institute for International Commerce Research, and Cho Rong-je, director of the Overseas Korean Forum. The World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations (World-OKTA) was represented by President Park Jong-beom, Vice President Joo Dae-seok and Senior Vice President Yang Ki-mo.

“The value of this forum is to expand the economic territory of


Korea, and the National Assembly will continue to support the Korean businesspeople who are working hard to do so,” said Rep. Kim Sung-won in his opening remarks.

The forum will support World-OKTA’s World Delegates Congress (April) and the Korea Business Expo (October), and conduct exchange projects with overseas Korean business people and economic organizations.

At the launching ceremony, members of the National Assembly from the ruling and opposition parties unanimously resolved to support the World-OKTA’s activities.

“The World-OKTA, which has been at the forefront of win-win development with its home country, is the largest overseas Korean business organization with 146 chapters in 67 countries, and we will strive to become one of the top seven economic organizations in Korea,” said Adviser Joo in his speech.

“We will do our best to prepare the Korea Business Expo, which will be held in October in Vienna, Austria, as a bridgehead to help small and medium-sized enterprises from our home country to expand overseas,” World-OKTA President Park Jong-beom said in his congratulatory remarks.

The forum was founded in May 2002 as the Overseas Koreans Economic Policy Research Group of the National Assembly and changed its name to the World Korean Economic Forum in 2020. 

OKA hosts World Korean Business Convention in Incheon

K-Beauty export consultation held successfully; 18.4 billion won in consultations



Attendees pose for a photo at the opening ceremony of the 2024 World Korean Business Convention and Export Consultation at Songdo Convensia in Incheon, South Korea, on Aug. 29.

For the first time, an expert forum and export consultation session were organized to promote the K-beauty industry, which has attracted global attention, along with the “hallyu” craze.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) and Incheon metropolitan city (Mayor Yoo Jung-bok) held the 2024 World Korean Business Convention and export counseling conference on the morning of Aug. 29 at Songdo Convensia in Incheon.

In his opening speech, Byun Chul-hwan, deputy commissioner of the OKA, said: “The OKA has been looking for practical ways to support the overseas expansion of Korean small and medium-sized enterprises, and as a result, we brought together around 200 overseas Korean business people who are leaders in their respective fields to support a Permanent Business Network, and launched the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Council. The resulting first project is today’s event.”

In his welcome speech, Hwang Hyo-jin, Incheon’s vice governor of global city and political affairs, said: “With a population of over 3 million, Incheon is a city of growth, the second-largest economic city and an international city with Incheon International Airport. With the opening of the third port, we are leaping into the top 10 of global cities. This event is a place for SMEs to connect with the world.”

In his keynote speech, Kwon Yong-soo, president of the Korea Cosmetics Association, said: “In the first quarter of 2024, the value

of cosmetics exports exceeded 3.2 trillion won. The export market has also diversified, and we are exporting to 175 countries. Korea has developed sophisticated designs and innovative marketing. This spread of the beauty industry is due to the fact that it resonates deeply with consumers with a basis in Korean culture. If domestic Korean companies and overseas Korean companies collaborate to grow together, K-beauty will spread.”

Following the keynote speech, a lively discussion on the spread of K-beauty was held. Professor Ko Sung-hyun of Kyungin Women’s University spoke about “The importance of industry-academia cooperation and talent cultivation”; Eom Dong-gi, head of the Small Business Innovation Department at the Small and Medium Business Distribution Center, spoke about “K-beauty SME export support strategies”; and Baek Seung-min, CEO of Exprive, spoke about “Strategies for spreading K-beauty through foreign influencers,” with each presentation being followed by discussions.

Following the forum, export consultation sessions were held between domestic K-beauty companies and 19 buyers from the United States, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Indonesia, New Zealand, Peru, China and the Czech Republic. As a result of the export consultations, a total of 113 consultations were held and valued at a total of 18.4 billion won, with an expected value of 4.5 billion won in contracts signed. In addition, two MOUs worth 560 million won were signed. 📄

Seniors with multiple citizenship must live in Korea for 5 years to receive basic pension

New obligation to report ‘overseas assets and income,’ such as real estate and pensions overseas

From now on, it will be much more difficult for seniors aged 65 and older with multiple citizenship to apply for and receive the basic pension in South Korea.

In the Pension Reform Promotion Plan Proposal, released Sept. 4, the Ministry of Health and Welfare said it will reorganize the basic pension system, which is funded by the public’s precious taxes, in a direction that will make it more practical.

In particular, as the number of multinational seniors receiving the basic pension is increasing every year, the ministry has decided to strengthen the conditions for receiving the pension to ensure fairness and equity, considering that they have likely lived abroad for a long time and have likely shouldered very little tax burden in Korea. Therefore, the ministry has decided to add a residency requirement for multinational seniors aged 65 and older, who must confirm that they have lived in Korea for at least five years since the age of 19 in order to receive the basic pension.

Looking at foreign examples, Sweden has implemented a “minimum guaranteed pension” for the elderly aged 65 and over who are in need, limited to those who have lived in the country for at least three years. In addition, given the difficulty of identifying overseas assets and income as real estate and pensions in foreign countries for seniors with multiple citizenship, it will become a requirement to declare their overseas income and assets.

Due to the nature of the basic pension, which is paid for by public taxes, the issue of providing the basic pension to multinational seniors who have lived abroad for most of their lives and likely paid little tax in Korea has been controversial since its introduction in 2014.

For this reason, the government has been trying to prevent a situation where the basic pension would be paid even to seniors



Kim Ji-eun, head of the Administrative Statistics Division at Statistics Korea, explains the results of the 2022 Pension Statistics at the Sejong government offices on Aug. 22.

with multiple citizenships living abroad, regardless of whether they live in Korea or not, as long as they are eligible. The Basic Pension Act excludes those in the bottom 70 percent of the income bracket over the age of 65 who stay abroad for more than 60 days per year from receiving the basic pension, which at least prevents multinationality seniors who do not live in Korea from receiving the basic pension.

However, currently, multinationality seniors can apply for and receive the basic pension just like single-nationality seniors without any restrictions, as long as they return to Korea after closing out their lives abroad and meet the criteria of the bottom 70 percent of income earners. Under these circumstances, the number of multinational basic pension recipients and the amount paid to them is increasing every year, at the same time as the total number of basic pension recipients is increasing due to the rapidly aging population. [\[참\]](#)

Musical movie ‘Songs of Love from Hawaii’ telling 121-year history of Koreans invited to Jecheon Int’l Music and Film Festival

Jo Sumi, Yongjae O’Neill, Kim Ji-yeon, Choi Tae-sung participating; forum also to be held



The movie poster for “Songs of Love from Hawaii” and film director Lee Jin-young



Now Production Film’s musical film “Songs of Love from Hawaii,” based on the 121-year history of Korean immigration to Hawaii, was invited to the Jecheon International Music and Film Festival and held its preview on Sept. 6 and 8.

Director Lee Jin-young, a Korean American, captured the beautiful Hawaiian landscape and the footsteps of his immigrant ancestors through local filming.

The film features songs by vocalist Jo Sumi and performances by Grammy Award-winning violinist Richard Yong-jae O’Neill, Julliard Competition-winning violinist Kim Ji-yeon, legendary Hawaiian guitarist Keola Beamer and veteran actress Ye Soo-jung voices the picture bride Lim Ok-soon.

The first preview on Sept. 6 featured a forum with Choi Tae-sung, a Korean history writer who served as the film’s historical adviser; director Lee; and Gary Park, a Korean descendant who contributed to the screenplay.

“Songs of Love from Hawaii” was officially invited to the 43rd Hawaii International Film Festival last October, where it made its world premiere.

Since then, it has been screened at schools, including UC Irvine, and at events, such as the Council of Korean Americans in Washington and the Korean American Federation in Los Angeles. The film will air on the U.S. Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) and will be released in theaters nationwide in Korea this coming October.

“The arrival of 102 Koreans in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Jan. 13, 1903, marked the beginning of the history of Koreans in Hawaii,” Lee said. “Through music, this film tells the story of why these immigrants left their homeland and settled in a faraway land, and how they put down roots to become great members of society today.”

Meanwhile, Lee won the Best New Director award at the Liberty International Film Festival and Tagore International Film Festival in 2021 for “Legacy of the Rainbow Nation,” a film about Korean immigration to the United States, and was invited to more than 10 film festivals around the world, including the 41st Hawaii International Film Festival, where the film was praised as a “warm and emotional look at the 118-year history of Korean immigration to Hawaii.” 



'22nd Korea-Germany Forum' held in Germany to discuss cooperation

The Korea Foundation (KF) discussed ways to strengthen future cooperation between the two countries at the 22nd Korea-Germany Forum in Dresden, Germany, on Sept. 5-6. The forum, which was held at the Volkswagen car factory under the theme of "Korea-Germany Value-Based Strategic Partnership in Response to Global Challenges," was attended by former Foreign Minister Park Jin, Korean Ambassador to Germany Lim Sang-beom, and National Assembly members Kim Hee-jung, Kim Hyung-dong and Kim Young-bae. From the German side, Martin Dulig, co-chair of the German-Korean Forum; Frank Hartmann, head of the Asia-Pacific Department at the German Foreign Office; Lars Rohwer, member of the Bundestag; and Till Scheer, CEO of Volkswagen Group Korea. The participants agreed on the need for the two countries to closely and jointly respond to various challenges in the context of geopolitical changes, including the war in Ukraine, the Middle East crisis, and military cooperation between Russia and North Korea. They also assessed that North Korea's nuclear arsenal, missile launches and arms exports directly threaten peace and security not only on the Korean Peninsula and the Indo-Pacific but also globally, and expressed concern over the country's poor human rights situation and economic difficulties.

KOICS sends 75 youth midterm volunteer members to 4 countries, including Laos

The Korea International Cooperation Service (KOICS) announced on Sept. 6 that it has dispatched 75 members to four countries that are part of the Korea International Cooperation Agency's "Youth Midterm Volunteer Service Project." In April, the KOICS won a tender to provide services in two of the five fields of the Youth Midterm Volunteer Service Project through a consortium, including digital (65 people) and disability and human rights (10 people). On Aug. 26, the KOICS dispatched the first batch of volunteers to four countries -- Laos, Cambodia, Rwanda and Tanzania -- after they underwent domestic training and remote overseas online volunteering. The company will conduct digital projects with the Korea Digital Education Association, and disability and human rights projects with Green Teachers. The participants will receive local language education, cultural experiences and safety training organized by the local offices of the KOICS. They will volunteer at local educational institutions and organizations for the disabled from this month through December. "By 2026, we will dispatch three batches of volunteers in the two fields to contribute to promoting friendship and cooperation between Korea and our partner countries," said a spokesperson for the organization. The KOICS is a nonprofit organization licensed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that works for poverty reduction and sustainable development, and was established in 2016.



8th Korean Chinese Youth Dream Presentation Festival held in Shenyang

The 8th Chinese Youth Dream Presentation Festival was held at Shenyang Hanjewon Folk Culture and Industry Park on Aug. 31 with the participation of 15 students selected from ethnic Korean schools in three northeast provinces. Hosted by the My Dream International Foundation and co-organized by the My Dream International Foundation's China branch, the Liaoning Provincial Korean Literature Society and the Liaoning District Creative Committee of the Yanbian Writers' Association, the Dream Presentation Festival was aimed at encouraging young people to discover their dreams and find their crisis-defying selves. According to the order of an online lottery, 15 boys and girls shared their innocent dreams. From diplomats to announcers to chefs, the dreams were diverse. Gye Eun-kyung from Shenyang City Korean People's No. 1 Middle School won the grand prize with "My dream of sparkling like a new star in the sky," Li Ga-jin from Shenyang City West Tower Korean School won the gold prize with "Cultivating the dream of a chef," and Han Soo-jin from Shenyang City Korean People's No. 1 Middle School won the joint silver prize with "A dream of a psychological magician," along with Li Hwon from Liaoning Dalian Korean School with "A statue in my heart." Twelve other students received honorable mentions, including "I Dream of Being a Diplomat" by Shim Soo-ah from Shenyang City West Tower Korean Minority School.

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

OKA must take action against population decline

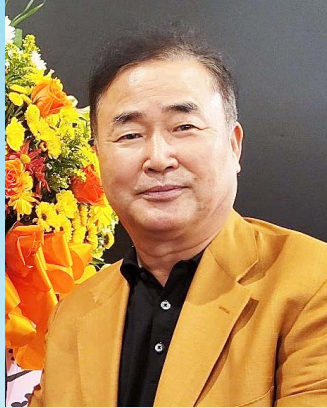
South Korea's declining birthrate is having a number of serious impacts on South Korean society. It will lead to a shrinking labor force, which could hinder economic growth, and poses a major challenge to the sustainability of Korean society in the long run.

The government has implemented various policies to address population decline, including support for births and attracting foreign labor. In particular, the policy of expanding the influx of foreigners has led to a significant increase in the number of foreigners who have acquired Korean citizenship. According to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the number of foreign residents came to around 200,000 in 2022, including 90,000 Korean Chinese, but this is far from enough to cope with the declining population.

For South Korea to address its demographic challenges in an age of declining birth rates, aging populations and multiculturalism, the country needs to attract the talented workforce of its 7.5 million overseas Koreans, and the Overseas Koreans Agency, a dedicated organization for overseas Koreans, must step up to the plate.

The Koryo migration policy is a good example. The OKA has been promoting various policies to help overseas Koreans, including the Koryo people, adapt to Korean society. In particular, as a result of the provision of visas for migration to Korea, information on residence and employment, Korean language training and cultural adaptation programs, the number of Koryo people living in Korea surpassed 100,000 for the first time last year, up from 2,392 in 2007. What is encouraging is that there has been a recent trend of younger Koryo people moving to Korea.

The Ministry of Justice is currently conducting a public opinion survey on "Multiple Citizenship and Renunciation/Loss of Nationality." The poll is intended to gauge public sentiment on the nationality system as a whole, but it also includes the government's



By Kang Nam-jung,
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and Broadcast Editors Association (former
president of Korean Association of Virginia)

proposal to lower the age for multiple citizenship to 55.

In parliament, former National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo has proposed to the policy committee that the age for multiple citizenship be lowered to 40, and People Power Party National Assembly member Kim Seok-ki introduced a bill to lower the age to 55 in 2022. However, the proposal has been slow to gain traction due to fear of public opposition.

There is another area where the OKA should take action. It is to grant Korean citizenship to more than 40,000 Korean adoptees in the United States who are "stateless" because they were unable to obtain citizenship there. The government has a responsibility to grant citizenship to these children, who became

"international orphans" due to the weaknesses of the Korean system at the time of their adoption.

South Korea has long been the world's largest exporter of orphans. On June 30, 2023, the "bill to enact a law on international adoption," which proposes guaranteeing the rights and interests of adopted children and strengthening state responsibility, passed a plenary session of the National Assembly. It amounts to the government's intention to directly intervene in international adoption. Due to the declining birth rate, the number of adopted children has dropped from 1,000 to fewer than 500 a decade ago, but about 40 percent of these children are still adopted overseas.

I propose that we enact an international adoption ban. There are already a growing number of countries around the world that have enacted adoption bans in their national laws. This is proof that they too are struggling with the problem of population decline.

Now, more than ever, every child and every citizen is precious, and it's time for more attention and more active policy intervention from the OKA. 차장

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



OKA Upcoming Events

Announcement of the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards winners (late September)
World Congress of Korean Associations Presidents (Oct. 1-4)
World Korean Business Convention (Oct. 22-24)

OKA Commissioner's Activities in September

Sept. 4: Meeting with board members and officials of the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA and the Korean Entrepreneurs Association in China
5: Review of financial statements for the Special Committee on Budget and Appropriations
6: Meeting with the president of the Korean Schools Association of America; post-training meeting of the Ulchi exercises
9: On-site inspection of the 22nd World Korean Business Convention (Jeonju, Jeonbuk)
9: Meeting with the head of the Presidential Committee for Decentralization and Balanced Development
10: Opening Ceremony of the 25th World Knowledge Forum (Yeongjongdo, Incheon)
11: Meeting with CEO of OBS Gyeongin TV
12: Visit to the Koryo compatriot community (Jecheon)
13: Meeting with the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA
19: Meeting with the president of the Federation of Korean Associations in China and the commissioner of the Incheon Free Economic Zone

OKA Announcements

Jeonbuk World Korean Business Convention registration extended to Sept. 30

Buyers and general public can register at HansangNet for free

The Overseas Koreans Agency is extending the registration period for the 22nd World Korean Business Convention until Sept. 30.

The extension aims to encourage more participation from those interested in mutual networking and promoting win-win development between Korea and overseas Koreans.

Applications can be submitted directly on the HansangNet website (www.hansang.net). The extension is for buyers and general visitors, and registration is free.

The 22nd World Korean Business Convention will be held from Oct. 22-24 in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do (Jeonbuk National University), under the slogan "Together with overseas Koreans, at the center of global business."

The event will consist of business programs, such as company exhibitions, one-on-one business meetings and startup competitions, as well as networking programs reflecting the latest economic issues, including the Leading CEO Forum, the Young Business Leaders Forum and the Venture Capital (VC) Investment Forum.

There will also be various programs to engage young people, such as a university student startup competition, a forum for Korean youth and a special lecture by Korean CEOs, as well as diverse linked programs that reflect the unique regional



Pictured is last year's ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the 21st World Korean Business Convention.

characteristics of Jeonbuk's culture, tourism and industry.

"We are grateful to all those who have registered their interest and participation in this year's event," OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. "We will do our best to prepare for the event so that it can be a place where overseas Korean companies and domestic Korean SMEs can create tangible business results."



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