

Revolutionary founding and modernization of the Republic of Korea and a global Korea model for the 21st century

KIM JIN-HYUN

THE Republic of Korea suffered exceptionally severe birth pains. Among many other modern nations in history, Korea's foundation process was particularly littered with agonising and divisive moments. In 1950, less than two years after its establishment, Korea found itself teetering on the brink of collapse with the outbreak of the Korea War. All these adversities notwithstanding, the past 60 years in Korea can be said to be the period of the "most successful modernisation revolution" from the perspec-

tive of both the several-thousand-year history of the Korean Peninsula and modern world history since the 18th century. Up-holding the cause of the independence movement against imperialist Japan and building on the success of the past 60 years, the Republic of Korea serves as the central foothold for 75 million Koreans across the globe.

Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the nation, we are now able to proudly declare to our founding fathers and to the entire world that Ko-rea is the only country among the approximately 140 newly independent coun-tries

since the end of the Second World War in 1945 that succeeded in complete modernising. It is not enough to describe the process of modernisation over the last 60 years simply with such words as growth, development, progress and success.

There was the revolutionary event in 1948 -- the founding of the nation -- and 60 years of the revolutionary modernisation of the Republic. There have been a number of historic revolutionary events throughout the world: the French Revolution in 1789, the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century in the United Kingdom and



The inaugural ceremony of the Republic of Korea in 1948

Armed with sophisticated industrial technologies in the electronics, shipbuilding, steel and automobile industries, Korea is now keeping abreast of the advanced countries in the field of future information technologies.

Korea and Singapore are the only two non-Western countries that spend approximately three percent of their GDP on research and development (R&D). The percentage of R&D expenditures in the GDP of the Republic is higher than that of the United Kingdom, France and Germany. At the time of liberation from the Japanese colonial rule, Korea's science and technology capabil-

ities were almost nonexistent, but in the 1960s, they began to rise to 1/500th and then to 1/100th of the level of Japan. The gap eventually has narrowed now to one fifth or one third of Japan's. The absolute number of students in engineering, science and technology outstrips that of Japan. The ratio of students advancing to institutions of higher education and studying overseas is too overwhelming to be compared with any other non-Western countries. Korea now ranks second or third in the world even when all the advanced countries are included.

Korea's overseas-market

oriented growth strategy, democratisation and development of higher education served as a catalyst for the promotion of socio-cultural pluralism and diversity in addition to economic progress. Notably, religious diversity stands out in the country, which makes Korea the sole nation in the world with a homogeneous ethnic background where Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity coexist in a balanced manner.

(Abridged)

Kim Jin-Hyun is Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Committee for the 60th Anniversary of the Republic of Korea on its Official Establishment.

AD 2009 3rd October Today, we are celebrating Korea's 4342nd Foundation Day

AD 1948 The foundation of Republic of Korea

AD 1945 Independence

AD 1910 Japanese colonial rule begin

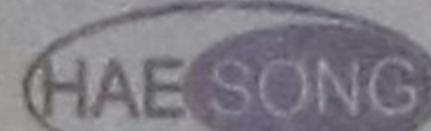
AD 1392 Establishment of Chosun

AD 918 Establishment of Goryeo

AD 676 Unification of 3 nations under Shin La

BC 57 The foundation of three nations
-18 Shin la, Goguryeo, Baek jae

BC 233 The Birth of Korea (Go Cho Sun)



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Civil Rights Movement in the 20th century in the United States. In the late 20th century, Korea became the sole country in the Third World that became a legend of success. It was tantamount to a revolution, even in the eyes of the world. Korea is the only nation that perfectly meets the standards of modernisation, which include democratisation of politics, economic growth, socio-cultural pluralism, higher education and the development of science and technology.

The freedom and democracy that Korea has achieved now are the first liberty, equality and welfare enjoyed by Koreans since the foundation of the first kingdom on the Korean Peninsula by Dangun. Their achievements are unprecedented in the thousands of years of their history. Freedom of the press and freedom of politics in Korea rank at the top among the 46 countries in the Eurasian Continent and the maritime regions of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, ranging from the Japanese Archipelago to the Ural Mountains. As evidenced by international indices released by Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders, Korea is now ahead of Japan, Singapore and India, countries that were re-garded in the 1960s to 1980s as much more advanced than the Republic. Ko-rea has also become a strong advocate for human rights so underdeveloped countries in Asia and Africa as well as NGOs from advanced countries come to the country to study its experience.

It is, indeed, unfortunate that the splendid, epochal enhancement of the Republic of Korea's freedom, democracy and human rights cannot reach across the truce line to the North where 23 million compatriots are suffering the worst violence and oppression in the world.

The "Miracle on the Han River" has become a classic example in the world of rapid economic growth and industrialisation in the modernisation process. Among about 140 non-Western countries that became independent since the end of the Second World War, only seven UN member countries have achieved \$10,000 in per capita income: Singapore, Brunei, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain and the Republic of Korea. Barring Korea, all these countries are either city-states with a population between 500,000 and three million or oil producing countries. They are not suitable for comparison on an equal footing with Korea in terms of modernisation standards because they have far more advantages in such conditions as population, international relations and the national security.

NGO supports development

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27
thesedays. In the past, that was a man's decision," one student said.

KOICA has allocated 300 million won (\$300,000) for the Farmer's Field School.

Farmers there are applying the techniques they have learned. In an evaluation conducted last November, production showed dramatic growth. Bogra residents have started storing their grain surplus.

"Only about two decades ago, Korea was receiving overseas aid. The fact that Korea is now providing other countries with support has given hope to local residents," Jang said.

The program works closely with the local and state governments. "I was impressed by the way the students applied the techniques to the actual farming process. I hope World Vision and the Bangladesh government will continue to work together in the future," said Chowdhury Abu Ala Maudodi, an official at the Bangladesh Department of Agriculture Extension.

Since 1995, KOICA has supported World Vision's international development activities in 15 countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

(Photo courtesy of World Vision Korea)

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