

4 WE ARE ALL EARTHLINGS AFTER ALL: YI SO-YEON



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11



HELLO WORLD

NEWS BRIEFING

'Seoul Festa 2023'

The Seoul Metropolitan Government on Sunday kicked off its annual tourist event, "Seoul Festa 2023," with a star-studded K-pop concert, making its way back to pre-pandemic normalcy. (Page 3)

SK Bioscience investment

SK Bioscience said Friday that the company would invest 2.4 trillion won (\$1.79 billion) over the next five years in new vaccine development and the expansion of manufacturing facilities both here and abroad. (Page 4)

Minister visits Boston Dynamics

South Korean Trade Minister Lee Chang-yong visited Boston Dynamics — Hyundai Motor Group's global robotics unit — in Waltham, Massachusetts, on Friday as the South Korean government looks to unveil its industrial strategy for advanced robotics in the first half of the year. (Page 5)

Sudan fighting in third week

Warplanes on bombing raids drew heavy fire over Khartoum as fighting between Sudan's army and paramilitaries entered a third week. (Page 8)

US urges China to stop act

The United States called on China Saturday to stop "provocative and unsafe conduct" in the disputed South China Sea after a recent near-collision with a Philippines Coast Guard boat. (Page 9)

K-Royal Culture Festival returns

The spring edition of the K-Royal Culture Festival with programs that can be enjoyed at Seoul's royal palaces is ongoing through May 7. (Page 11)

Andreeva's breakout tournament

Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva found the perfect way to celebrate her 16th birthday by continuing her breakout showing at the Madrid Open with a two-set win over Magda Linette on Saturday. (Page 15)



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (left) waves at Seoul Air Base in Seongnam, Gyeonggi Province, Sunday, alongside his wife Kim Keon Hee, as they return from a state visit to the United States. Yonhap

Yoon fetes new nuclear accord as allies take harder line on NK

By Choi Si-young

President Yoon Suk Yeol returned to his office Sunday after a six-day trip to the US, touting the accord to give South Korea a bigger say in a potential US nuclear response to North Korea as an upgrade to the existing Seoul-Washington mutual defense treaty.

▶ Related content on Page 3

The Washington Declaration, which gives Seoul a seat at the table on using Washington's nuclear force in exchange for swearing off an independent nuclear buildup, is a major shift from the previous administration's approach to Pyongyang that heavily relied on diplomacy. Analysts who have supported a harder line on the isolated country, which continues to defy international sanctions over its nuclear and missile programs, hailed the accord.

Wi Sung-lac, South Korea's former chief nuclear envoy on

North Korea, said the Yoon administration "has chosen the right path for a nonnuclear state to beef up defense against Pyongyang."

An NPT withdrawal would not only make South Korea a rule breaker, like North Korea, but test Asia's fourth-largest economy, with no help to enlist for bypassing potential international sanctions.

During a meeting Friday at Harvard University's Kennedy School, Yoon said South Korea could develop its own nuclear weapons "within a year at the earliest," but "political and economic considerations" were pushing the country to abide by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. "South Korea and the US shook hands on the declaration on a one-on-one basis, which tells me this is an accord more effective than the one binding NATO," Yoon said at the meeting.

A Nuclear Consultative Group, set up under the new accord, is Seoul's commitment not to violate the NPT, Yoon added.

A Nuclear Consultative Group brings together senior Seoul and Washington officials to regularly discuss categorizing cases where nuclear weapons might be used. The South Korean military will learn how to support US nuclear operations, with Seoul's fighters escorting American warplanes capable of nuclear strikes.

"We've clearly reinforced deterrence. The question now is how we work to make a really functioning Nuclear Consultative Group, which is by far the most advanced body we have seen when it comes to jointly responding to North Korea," Wi told The Korea Herald on Sunday, referring to activities accompanying such regular meetings.

Tabletop exercises or simulations involving the allies' forces will take place as the US more frequently deploys its strategic assets like nuclear ballistic missile submarines to the South, though Washington has not promised to make the deployment routine. The US says it

does not intend to reverse its 1991 withdrawal and redeploy tactical nuclear weapons in the South, either.

While South Korea and the US will not exercise "joint command over actual US nuclear weapons," Seoul can see "almost the same results from such 'nuclear sharing'" if the two allies set up a well-coordinated NCG, with the US deeply committing itself to deploying its strategic assets, said Park Won-gon, a professor of North Korean Studies at Ewha Womans University.

Shortly after Wednesday's summit, Edgard Kagan, senior director for East Asia and Oceania on the US National Security Council, said the latest nuclear accord is not an endorsement of "de facto nuclear sharing," dismissing a previous description of the Washington Declaration by Yoon's office that it "essentially makes South Koreans feel like they share the weapons."

The declaration was the highlight of the summit that marked

70 years of ties, but skeptics say it hardly alleviates growing doubts about South Korea's concerns about America's will to use its nuclear weapons to defend its ally. They say the accord has only refashioned "all the rhetoric about such 'extended deterrence.'"

Those skeptics have also warned of alienating China and Russia, the two biggest supporters of North Korea, which have claimed that Seoul and Washington are setting off a new arms race in the region.

Both countries' governments issued statements warning that "any attempts to raise tension hampering stability in the region should be stopped."

"I don't see immediate clashes with those countries but in the long-term the Yoon administration should come up with ways to manage ties with Beijing and Moscow. We can't risk worsening relations with them," Park said of Yoon's policy on those countries.

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In trilingual Hong Kong, Korean is new kid on the block

With surging interest in Hallyu, city's public schools introduce Korean to curriculum

The following series is part of The Korea Herald's "Hello Hangeul" project which consists of interviews, in-depth analyses, videos and various other forms of content that shed light on the stories of people who are learning the Korean language and the correlation between Korea's soft power and the rise of its language within the league of world languages. — Ed.

By Naomi Ng

At the chime of the school bell, ten 15-year-olds rise from their seats and bow to the teacher, chirping in unison, "annyeongha-

seyo," or "hello" in Korean.

It's an unusual greeting to hear in Hong Kong schools, where the corridors are usually filled with a cacophony of Cantonese, English and Mandarin. But at Mu Kuang English School, a middle and high school partly subsidized by the government, it's how 90 students begin their weekly Korean classes.

▶ Related content on Page 2

Over the next hour, teacher Canny Lai Yuen-wa speaks in an interwoven mix of Cantonese and Korean, explaining how to make simple sentences like "I eat lunch in the classroom."

"In Korean, the sentence structure is different from Chinese. You'd say, 'I, classroom at, lunch, eat' instead," Lai said, eliciting giggles from the students.

While Korean has long been taught at private academies and at the university level in the city, elementary, middle and high schools have just begun to pay attention to the rise in interest in the language.

Riding the Korean Wave

Mu Kuang was the first school in Hong Kong to introduce Korean as part of its regular curriculum in September 2021. First- and second-year middle schoolers are required to take a foreign language subject and can choose between Korean and Japanese. Around a third of the 282 students picked Korean.

When asked why he chose to learn Korean, Jacob Xiang Wenjie,

14, proudly spread his collection of photo cards of his favorite K-pop girl group, Blackpink, on the table.

"I have so much more at home ... at least 500 of them," Jacob said.

"Lisa is my wife," he added, professing his love for the quartet's Thai rapper.

Educators say the move to offer Korean classes was undoubtedly driven by students' interest in all things Korean.

Thanks to the Korean Wave, young people have been exposed to a heavy dose of Korean pop culture in the past decade or so, such as the 2019 Oscar-winning "Parasite," 2021 Netflix hit "Squid Game" and BTS, arguably the biggest boy band in the world.

"There's no denying that the students are captivated by Korean culture, K-dramas and K-pop," said Ho Sai-cheong, principal of Mu Kuang English School.

Burgeoning student interest aside, Ho said the school also recognized Korea and Japan as rising economic powers in Asia, and the school wants to equip students so they can better communicate with their neighbors.

"In this increasingly global village, you can't survive if you don't know at least five to six languages," Ho said.

Multilingual edge

For decades, the most popular foreign languages among Hong Kong students have been French, Spanish, German and Japanese. But in recent years, Korean has emerged as the new kid on the block.

The latest estimate by the Korean consulate in Hong Kong showed there were around 40,000 Korean

Continued on Page 2

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