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Hues of Life

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BUSINESS
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KINGO WALK
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Editor’s LETTER

Stay a Little Longer

The next page, the next chapter, the next step… No matter how stagnant the present may feel, one may find comfort in the fact that there is always the next stage lying just ahead. In a world that inundates us with the pressure to constantly chase the next big thing, moving on becomes an ingrained state of mind. In this consistent cycle of transition, the desire to linger a little longer in the safe haven you have built may seem like putting a halt to the hard-earned momentum. For us, that haven was the warmth and familiarity of the Sungkyun Times. As the semesters drifted by, we had not realized that our comfort lay within the familiar walls of the editorial office, our monthly meetings, and late nights filled with the sound of clacking keyboards. These busy days became a cherished pattern that we had merged into.

However, we have inevitably arrived at the door, being gently ushered toward taking the next step into the unknown. To anyone who is also standing between the lines of the present and the future, let this be a reminder to let yourself breathe. It is often in those unhurried moments where our most nourishing growth takes root before blossoming into the next stage.

As for what is behind that door, who can say? Regardless, we can anchor ourselves in the certainty that no matter the question marks, a grand adventure awaits on the other side. So, dear Kingos, if you are still apprehensive about opening that door, allow yourself to stay inside a little longer — for the world will still be there when you are ready to greet it.

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Professor Hwang Se-Rim’s Research Team: Groundbreaking Research in the Boom of AI Influencers

Research on the effectiveness of artificial intelligence (AI) influencers by Assistant Professor Hwang Se-rim at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) Graduate School of Business (GSB) was published in the May and June issues of Harvard Business Review, a business journal with high authority. Prof. Hwang studied and analyzed over 1 million media content uploads with her research team, including Assistant Professor Shunyuan Zhang at Harvard University, Associate Professor Xiou Liu at New York University, and Professor Kannan Srinivasan at Carnegie Mellon University for six years. Influencer marketing has increased in popularity due to its outstanding marketing efficacy. However, companies are gradually shifting to marketing strategies that incorporate AI influencers rather than human influencers. This change emerged because of human influencers’ adverse impact on the effectiveness of marketing. Prof. Hwang’s research team evaluated the effectiveness of human and AI influencers on five factors: engagement, reach, diversity, reputation risk, and cost. The study discovered that AI influencers engaged with more consumers than human influencers. In particular, AI influencers were less embroiled in scandals or notorious reputations while saving on marketing expenses. This research proved that AI influencers have strengths surpassing traditional human influencers.

The College of Liberal Arts at SKKU Growing in Stature Day by Day

The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU), Ahn Dae-hoe, revealed that the college received the highest S-ranking in the Initiative for College of Humanities Research and Education (CORE) post-management evaluation. CORE was conducted to encourage the vitalization of the field of humanities, which was supported by the Ministry of Education from 2016 to 2018. Colleges that participated in CORE were monitored for five years, from 2019 to 2023, to supervise and maintain their significant achievements even after their completion. Thus, the announcement on CORE post-management evaluation reflects the overall outcome of universities over five years. During the fifth year of the post-management evaluation period, the College of Liberal Arts at SKKU mainly aimed to enhance its promotion of humanities by strengthening the lecture strategies specified in the field, improving the major courses, and more. The National Research Foundation of Korea assessed SKKU as having the best practice in establishing various courses specified in humanities and activating humanities-integrated classes through cross-listing courses. The College of Liberal Arts at SKKU revealed its goals to continue to revitalize the study of humanities by supporting future generations in academic research.

The First Step to Success, Failure

The Student Success Center (SSC) at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) was founded in 2019 to establish a student success model and ultimately build its gateway. The center has two locations: on the first floor of the International Hall on the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC) and the first floor of the Samsung Library on the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC). The SSC currently provides various programs under the SKKU’s primary ideology, pronounced Su-Gi-Chi-In, which emphasizes self-discipline. Specifically, there is a program called Student Success Story Special Lectures, where students can share their stories about how they self-directed their life journey toward success within a wide variety of topics such as academics, global experience, and more. On May 9th, the 30th Special Lectures were held on Pioneering Career Path Crossing over Metaverse and Artificial Intelligence Technology. The most competitive strength of SKKU’s SSC lies in its program called Failure Commemoration Week for SKKU Members. In an interview with the Sungkyun Times (SKT), an academic researcher at the SSC revealed the background of the program, saying, “Given the growing awareness of valuing failures among the younger generation, the SSC devised to create a campus culture where students naturally perceive their failure experiences as the process of success.” During the annual Failure Commemoration Week held on October 13th, the SSC runs the Failure Tree Post-it Campaign, where students can write down their past trials and stick their post-it notes to the Failure Tree to share them. In an interview with the SKT, the SSC stated, “Negative emotions that students had held turned out to be reduced after the Failure Tree Post-it Campaigns, as they share their failure stories with other students.” Other programs at the SSC include workbook writing activities called Grand Failures and mentoring programs with professors or alumni.

The Key to the SSC, Active Student Engagement

Despite a wide range of helpful programs led by the SSC, student participation remains low. In an interview with the SKT, the SSC explained that 347 undergraduate students participated in the 2023 Failure Commemoration Week, and 528 students joined the mentoring programs last year. However, considering the SSC’s program promotion is aimed at the entire student body, there is still a significant lack of student engagement. In fact, Cho Seo-yeon (Sophomore, Department of Economics) told the SKT, “Nowadays, I am spending a lot of time thinking about my future job, but I did not even notice there was such a mentoring program by the SSC.” Meanwhile, the SSC has been promoting its programs in many ways. Their promotion methods include push notifications through the Kingo-M application, posts on their official Instagram account, and posters on offline notice boards. The SSC told the SKT that they periodically recruit Student Success Supporters and attempt to reach out to students for their perspectives. The SSC also plans to renew programs by monitoring not only SKKU’s programs but also other universities’ programs in detail. More voluntary and active student engagement seems urgent in pushing forward the detailed and mutual gateway for not only the student’s success but also the SSC’s development.
Enriching Myself in Korea

Please introduce yourself.
Hello! My name is Han Haoqing, and I come from Jilin Province in Northeast China, renowned for the beautiful Changbai Mountains. I arrived at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) this semester as an exchange student majoring in economics. It is an honor to introduce myself at the Sungkyun Times.

Why did you choose Korea and SKKU?
I chose to come to South Korea as an exchange student because of the country's rich culture and its reputation for academic excellence, particularly in economics. South Korea's dynamic economy and innovative business practices are incredibly inspiring for me as an economics student. Another reason for choosing SKKU was that my favorite professor completed his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program at SKKU. We met several times, and our conversations about Korea and SKKU helped me make my decision.

How is your life at SKKKU?
I am thrilled to finally be at my long-awaited destination, SKKU. I have always hoped to connect with friends from around the globe, but circumstances never aligned until now. Thanks to this exchange program, I have realized this dream and made friends with fellow exchange students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Engaging with them has not only exposed me to the beauty of cultural diversity but also expanded my horizons. I was also fortunate to have incredibly supportive professors and teaching assistants by my side. I am very grateful that they offer 100% enthusiasm and patience whenever they are needed.

What were your expectations when coming to Korea, and how were they met?
Before coming to Korea, I looked forward to experiencing different aspects of university life. Although the class content is similar, there are also many courses that my home university did not offer. So, I learned more about my major here and strengthened my quantitative analysis skills. Moreover, while participating in various school activities, I learned that Korean university students are full of energy. They are cheerful, optimistic, and full of talent.

Mandatory Preventive Education

Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) provides online preventive education materials for international students stable relocation and study life in Korea. All international students enrolled for this semester must complete two online education courses by the deadline. The courses consist of The Introduction of K-Law, which must be completed by July 2nd, and Online Education for Human Rights and Prevention of Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence, which must be completed by December 31st. The courses are available in Korean, English, and Chinese, and students must watch all the lectures on i-Campus for completion. If students fail to complete the courses within the given periods, they cannot view their final grades during the final grade checking period from June 27th to July 3rd. If the completion is made during the grade checking period, the grades will be accessible from the next day of completion. However, if the student does not complete the education, the transcript will be available only on July 3rd. Students can contact the Office of International Student Services (OISS) or the Human Rights Center for more information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Title</th>
<th>The Introduction of K-Law</th>
<th>Online Education for Human Rights and Prevention of Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requirement</td>
<td>Every semester (once a semester)</td>
<td>Every year (once a year)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline</td>
<td>July 2nd, 2024 (Spring semester in 2024)</td>
<td>December 31st, 2024 (2024 academic year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>OISS (<a href="mailto:bisshs@skku.edu">bisshs@skku.edu</a>)</td>
<td>Human Rights Center (<a href="mailto:helper@skku.edu">helper@skku.edu</a>)</td>
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The Beauty of Hangeul Calligraphy

The Office of International Student Services (OISS) is currently offering a cultural experience program organized by the National Hangeul Museum (NHM). Titled “The Beauty of Hangeul Calligraphy,” the program consists of creating postcards and wall hangings with self-written Hangeul calligraphy. Targeted for groups of about 20 people from overseas who are interested in Hangeul and Korean culture, its purpose is to help enhance the understanding of the modern use of Korean fonts and styles. The program can be held offline in the museum or online in real-time sessions through Zoom on weekday afternoons. Students can apply for the program by submitting the application form by e-mail to the NHM program manager. The application form and e-mail address are available on the NHM homepage, and the application fee is free. The program is available until November 29th for all international students who want to create their own work using Hangeul calligraphy.
From Economics to Law

**Q1** Could you please introduce yourself?  
Hello, I am Attorney Oh Su-hyun. After graduating from the Department of Global Economics at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU), I became a lawyer and now work as a civil law lecturer and writer. I am also a partner attorney at Approach Law Firm, where I strive to work closely with clients and delve into the essence of cases.

**Q2** What kind of student were you at SKKU’s Department of Global Economics?  
I was a diligent student with a solid academic drive. Since I was accepted to SKKU in 2009, I have been deeply interested in economic research and served as a teaching assistant. This major suited my aptitude well, so I enjoyed reading classic literature in related fields even outside of exam periods and furthered my studies at Indiana University.

**Q3** What led you to aspire to become a lawyer despite studying economics?  
Although I had a passion for economics, a turning point led me to transition to law — taking a law class at Indiana University in my senior year. The class, which focused on legal philosophy and famous thinkers like Montesquieu, left a profound impression on me. At that time, I was contemplating whether to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in economics or prepare for law school following my undergraduate studies. However, after taking that class, I decided to delve deeper into studying law.

**A Lawyer Writing and Lecturing**  
As a Legal Practitioner

**Q4** What values and attitudes do you consider to be essential as a lawyer that legal professionals should most importantly possess?  
Pride in handling legal matters is crucial, particularly in litigation. A law firm is a very high-intensity workplace, so it is challenging to sustain a long career without passion for one’s profession. For instance, you may face defendants daily when handling criminal cases, which can be emotionally draining. Despite such stress, having pride is essential for long-term commitment. As legal professionals, we must have a sense of duty to persuade judges, change precedents, and assist others, thereby contributing to societal change.

**Q5** Please briefly introduce your book, The Easiest Civil Law Book in Korea.

The Easiest Civil Law Book in Korea is a humanities book I wrote to promote the joy and usefulness of studying civil law. It explains civil law concepts through everyday transactions. For example, it extracts concepts of sale and agency contracts from the simple act of buying a snack at a convenience store. Through this approach, this book aims to expand perspectives by elucidating the essence of complicated terms in everyday language.

**Q6** What aspect did you pay the most attention to while writing the book?  
I spent a lot of time adjusting the difficulty level of the book’s content. Using material that is too difficult might alienate readers while only using straightforward content might make it lack substance. I wanted to find the balance between making it moderately challenging yet differentiated from existing civil law books. I also remember struggling to sift through the critical points of civil law and choose topics that would be interesting. Writing a book is a process that must consider the readers, so I always tried to think from their perspective.

**Q7** When was your most rewarding moment after the book was published?  
I felt most rewarded when readers contacted me personally. Receiving e-mails saying that they finally understood complex concepts they could not grasp in school lectures or online courses stands out the most. I had been consistently uploading my work to an online writing and publishing platform, Brunch Book, even before the book’s formal publication, so I also vividly remember reading the comments from early readers. Thanks to the gratitude expressed by my readers, I am reinvigorated to continue writing.

**Q8** Were there any challenges you faced while working as an author?  
It was not easy to maintain creativity consistently. Writing requires methodical attempts unlike ordinary work, where you are guaranteed to forge ahead with enough effort. There were instances where I spent hours trying but could not properly complete a piece. Good writers need their routines to maintain their creativity. Methods such as consistently reading a wide range of genres outside one’s field of interest, including essays, articles, and novels, may help.

**Q9** What are your thoughts on receiving the award from Brunch Book?  
I want to thank the Brunch Book staff, who allowed me to place my name on the bestseller shelf even though I was not a professional writer. Brunch Books gives writers a chance to publish a book after they upload a certain number of pieces of writing on the website. This platform helped me consistently write whatever I wanted anytime, anywhere. I am also grateful to the readers who showed love and interest, and I hope to become a better writer and write many
Q10 Was there a specific reason that motivated you to become a civil law lecturer?

The Easiest Civil Law Book in Korea, which I did not have high expectations for, led to lecture offers from various places as it won an award at the Brunch Book Award and remained a bestseller for a long time. Through this, I observed that the public had a lack of knowledge in civil law. After considering if there was any way I could help, I decided to become a lecturer. The transition happened naturally, from tutoring close acquaintances to standing at a civil law lecture in front of a crowd.

Q11 Among various legal subjects, what is the allure of civil law that led you to teach it?

I focus on teaching civil law because of its high importance. Civil law is known as the foundation for all other laws. It opens various areas of law, including administrative, criminal, and public law. Except for particular fields like criminal law, civil law can explain the most complex relationships through its principles. Since my time in law school, I have dedicated much time to studying civil law, and I still find its straightforward depiction of the world beautiful.

Q12 Do you have a specific direction when teaching civil law?

Firstly, I aim to understand the broader framework that encompasses society. Secondly, I ensure detailed learning through concrete cases to avoid falling into abstract concepts. For example, I make sure that students understand how laws reflect reality through actual precedents and grasp the ideas prioritized by academics through previous exam questions. Lastly, I aim to provide tips for students preparing for essential exams. The reason why I emphasize balance is because when I was a student, I tended to focus excessively on one aspect. I eventually realized near graduation that studying everything at an even weight was the right approach.

Q13 Are there any other professions or areas of interest you would like to challenge yourself with?

My book falls under the field of humanities and the explanatory writing genre, but I have always dreamed of writing essays. I would like to venture into a new domain as a writer by pursuing that dream. Unlike my previous book, which compiled widely known information, I aspire to publish an essay book where I can logically argue and creatively depict various topics.

Q14 As an alumnus of SKKU, do you have any advice for Kingos?

I actively encourage students to seek out the various opportunities provided by the university. SKKU spares no effort to provide students with the best experiences possible. I eventually realized near graduation that studying everything at an even weight was the right approach.

Grade Inflation Epidemic

As the graduation season has approached the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cohort, the Korea University Graduate School of Law has reduced the significance of undergraduate grades in their 2024 admissions evaluation criteria. Grade inflation is a sensitive issue as it directly influences students’ job prospects and chances of admission to graduate schools. Therefore, the Sungkyun Times (SKT) aims to explore the issues surrounding grade inflation.

Caught in the GPA Balloon

Grade Inflation

What Is Grade Inflation?

Grade inflation occurs when a higher proportion of university students receive high grades, ultimately diminishing the overall value of the grades. This phenomenon has been notably exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, many universities transitioned from a relative grading system to an absolute grading system due to the prevalence of remote learning. Unlike the competitive nature of relative grading, the absolute grading system sets clear score thresholds for achieving favorable results, enabling more students to achieve high grades.

Unveiling the Current Landscape of Grade Inflation

Grade inflation is a widespread issue across Korean universities, albeit with varying grading policies among institutions.
Grades during the pandemic may enjoy an unfair advantage. There is a growing concern that those who received higher grades during the pandemic are graduating and entering the fiercely competitive job market and the realms of graduate school admissions. This disparity in grading practices was partly attributed to the varying impact of government policies on each university. In 2014, the MOE introduced the appropriateness of a grade distribution indicator in university evaluations to curb grade inflation. However, regional universities, particularly those with less financial stability than those in Seoul City counterparts, were more responsive to government policies. Notably, four-year universities in Seoul City for example, Woosuk University and Honam University upheld strict grading standards, with only 26-29% of students receiving an A in their major courses. Conversely, many universities in provincial areas tended to adopt more conservative grading policies. For example, Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) was known for their lenient grading practices. This trend was amplified in graduate school admissions, among corporate human resources teams and graduate school admissions offices, making grades pivotal in quantitative assessments.

Evaluation agencies, such as companies’ human resources teams and graduate school admissions offices, are grappling with significant challenges in assessing applicants due to grade inflation. This inflation undermines the reliability and discriminative value of grades as an assessment criterion, which has traditionally been a crucial metric for evaluating applicants. According to a survey conducted in May 2023 by Job Korea, an online recruiting company, school grades were unanimously cited as a critical factor in applicant evaluations. Departments should foster open discussions among faculty members to ensure fair evaluations. This strategy has been proven effective through established discussion platforms at Princeton University and Louisiana State University since the early 2000s. Moreover, implementing systems for comparing evaluation standards among professors can aid in standardizing grades. Examples from renowned universities such as Harvard and Duke, where grade distribution data within departments are shared among professors each semester, demonstrate the potential to mitigate grade inflation trends. Since grade inflation directly impacts students, their input is also invaluable. Establishing regular forums with student representatives will foster meaningful discourse and ensure the consideration of student perspectives.

Grade inflation poses a significant challenge, particularly in ensuring fairness in grading among students. The issue arises from disparities in how students were affected by the absolute grading system during the pandemic, leading to differences in their grades. Consequently, debates on fairness have surged, especially among students who did not benefit from the absolute grading system. This group includes pre-pandemic enrollees, those who passed studies for military service during the pandemic, and students from institutions with rigorous evaluation standards throughout. One of the primary areas where unfairness becomes evident is in employment and graduate school admissions. Disconcert among students is mounting as those who received high grades during the pandemic are graduating and entering the fiercely competitive job market and the realms of graduate school admissions. There is a growing concern that those who received higher grades during the pandemic may enjoy an unfair advantage in these competitive arenas, particularly given the challenging job-seeking landscape. In an interview with SKT, Kim Jeong-woo (Junior, Department of Business Administration, Chung-Ang University) expressed his disappointment, stating, “I am dismayed by the significant drop in my grade average compared to my peers after returning from military service during COVID-19. I am worried this might set me back in my job search.” In areas such as law school admissions, where grades wield considerable influence in shaping outcomes via quantitative assessments, the tangible effects of grade inflation are keenly felt. The saturation of applicants boasting stellar grades and the thin margin between acceptance and rejection highlight the direct consequences of inflation.

Immediate action is required given the nationwide prevalence of the fundamental issues of persisting grade inflation, including ongoing oversight from the MOE. By learning from the ineffective policies identified in the 2014 evaluation, structural reforms, it is imperative to refine the specifics of incentives to tackle grade inflation across all universities, regardless of their affiliation or location. In addition, universities must take proactive steps toward combating grade inflation. They should initiate gradual reforms within each institution and build upon these efforts to achieve a lasting impact. One effective strategy is enhancing evaluation through increased involvement of professors. Departments should foster open discussions among faculty members to ensure fair evaluations. This strategy has been proven effective through established discussion platforms at Princeton University and Louisiana State University since the early 2000s. Moreover, implementing systems for comparing evaluation standards among professors can aid in standardizing grades. Examples from renowned universities such as Harvard and Duke, where grade distribution data within departments are shared among professors each semester, demonstrate the potential to mitigate grade inflation trends. Since grade inflation directly impacts students, their input is also invaluable. Establishing regular forums with student representatives will foster meaningful discourse and ensure the consideration of student perspectives.

The guidance from the government and the proactive efforts of universities are crucial in gradually tackling grade inflation, but they cannot single-handedly resolve the widespread issue. Alongside these initiatives, there is an urgent need for evaluation agencies to revamp their methods. This entails shifting toward a more comprehensive evaluation approach that utilizes other factors beyond mere grades. While current assessments do consider various factors, they must lessen the persistent reliance on grades stemming from their perceived objectivity. Hence, it is imperative to transition away from this grade-centric model toward a qualitative evaluation system that considers elements such as extracurricular involvement, certifications, practical experiences, and interviews. This shift is especially vital in graduate school admissions offices, where quantitative metrics often dominate. One graduate admissions officer at SKKU told the SKT, “We are committed to adopting methods that better encompass the diverse qualities of applicants, moving beyond grades alone.” This evolution in evaluation methodology would incentivize students to engage in activities that enhance their practical skills. For instance, it would prevent students from opting out of pursuing courses aligned with their interests out of fear of receiving low grades. This new evaluation method could empower students to explore their passions freely, fostering a more diverse range of experiences conducive to their future careers.

**Navigating Solutions for Grade Inflation**

**Enforcing Stringent Guidelines**

**Swelling Challenges in Applicant Evaluation**

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**Evaluating Applicants Holistically beyond Grades**

Grades have the appeal of clearly indicating distinctions through numbers. Consequently, students rely on grades to objectively validate their accomplishments. However, it is worth contemplating whether grades truly serve as accurate indicators of students’ diligence and efforts in today’s landscape. Effective resolution of this issue is imperative to prevent students’ endeavors from being in vain. The SKT hopes that Kingos will also take a keen interest in this issue and keep a watchful eye. At Seoul City University, a new student grading system was introduced in 2015, where grades are no longer the sole determinant of academic achievements. Instead, students are evaluated based on a combination of factors, including extracurricular activities, community service, and personal development. This approach is designed to provide a more comprehensive view of a student’s capabilities and potential. For instance, a student might excel in coursework but struggle with time management skills, leading to lower grades. Under this new system, their efforts would still be recognized, fostering a more holistic perspective on academic success.

Graduates from this institution are expected to enter the workforce with a diverse set of skills and experiences. This is particularly important in today’s competitive job market, where employers seek candidates with not just academic credentials but also practical experience and leadership qualities. By evaluating applicants holistically, companies can identify those who possess the necessary qualities to contribute to their organizations. This approach challenges traditional grading systems and encourages a more nuanced understanding of a candidate’s potential.

**Aggravating Burdens of the Students**

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First Meeting of the President and Opposition Party

On April 29th, President Yoon Suk-yeol and the leader of the Democratic Party of Korea, Lee Jae-myung, had their first summit meeting at the Yongma Presidential Office. There were primarily 12 agendas discussed in the meeting, including the controversy of First Lady Kim Jeon-hee accepting a luxury bag, the Itaewon Special Act, healthcare reform, and the research and development (R&D) budget. The same afternoon, the chief spokesperson of the Democratic Party of Korea, Park Sung-joon, stated, “Lee Jae-myung expressed the voice of dissatisfaction and disappointment after seeing President Yoon, but they both sympathized with the necessity for communication,” implying that President Yoon and Lee could not find an agreement for most of the agendas. This conflict is expected to continue in the 22nd National Assembly. Although the political circle hoped that the confrontation between the ruling and opposition parties would ease after the 2024 South Korean legislative election, President Yoon’s position on controversial agendas has become more apparent. Meanwhile, on May 2nd, the first agreement on the Itaewon Special Act passed the National Assembly. This act guarantees the reinvestigation and the protection of victims’ rights of the Itaewon crowd crush on October 29th, 2022. This act was solely processed by the Democratic Party of Korea in January 2024, and it has been waiting for a revision due to the request for reconsideration by President Yoon. The political circles analyze that the official conversation between the government and the opposition party would have had a critical influence on the amendment agreement of the bill.

Arrival of AI Counselor from National Tax Service

Last May, artificial intelligence (AI) counseling, which is capable of 24-hour counseling related to global income tax filing and payment, was introduced to the National Tax Service (NTS). On April 30th, the director of the Individual Taxation Bureau, Min Ju-won, presented the pilot project for an AI counselor within Global Income Tax at the Government Complex in Sejong. The introduction of AI counselors aims to offer better service to taxpayers by enabling 24-hour real-time counseling, including non-regular working hours. This system is expected to help alleviate the taxpayers inconvenience caused by the heavy call volume to the National Tax Consultation Center or the NTS office. As taxpayers call the Individual Taxation Bureau, Min Ju-won, presented the Tax Consultation Center or the NTS office. As taxpayers call hours. This system is expected to help alleviate the taxpayers’ feelings of frustration. Counselors will answer individual questions that include taxpayers’ personal information or in-depth professional tax advisor would answer individual questions on tax law, precedent case law, and consulting cases as learning materials. The NTS is planning to enlarge the scope of the town and city, and city government. The NTS plans to expand the scope of the town and city, and city government. The NTS plans to expand the scope of the town and city, and city government.

United States — Saudi Arabia Defense Pact, Potentially Very Close to Completion

On April 29th, the United States (U.S.) Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Saudi Arabia’s Crown Mohammed bin Salman and suggested that the U.S. — Saudi Arabia defense pact is “potentially very close to completion.” This defense pact is one of the Biden-Harris Administration’s key foreign policies. Aiming for normalization in relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, the act consists of mutual defense conditions. It is similar to the mutual defense treaty between the U.S. and South Korea, as the U.S. would provide military assistance when Saudi Arabia is attacked. Saudi Arabia has been demanding a mutual defense treaty with the U.S. and permission for uranium enrichment to normalize relations with Israel. This aligned with Biden’s interest in mediating Saudi Arabia and Israel’s relations. However, the negotiations came to a halt when Hamas attacked Israel last October. Ceasefire in Gaza is the core of the relationship between the two countries, as Saudi Arabia asserted that there would not be any negotiations without the end of Israel’s attacks toward Gaza. Currently, Israel does not recognize Palestine as a state and, therefore, is not in diplomatic relations. After the meeting, Blinken urged Hamas to “accept Israel’s generous deal.” If a mutual hostage exchange occurs, a ceasefire of 10 weeks will follow, with additional negotiations for a permanent ceasefire. This is expected to have a significant impact on normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, as well as inducing a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

Ukraine’s Harry Potter Castle, Destroyed during Russia’s Attack

On April 30th at 6:30 p.m., Russia launched a missile attack on the southern port city of Odessa in Ukraine, a regular target for its port infrastructure. Ukraine reported 5 deaths and 32 injuries, including pregnant women and children, with 8 in critical condition. Russia’s sudden attack not only resulted in severe casualties but also destroyed 20 residential buildings and other infrastructure, according to Oleh Kiper, the head of the military administration of the region. The so-called Harry Potter Castle, renowned for its Gothic style similar to the castle in J.K. Rowling’s novel, was also engulfed in flames. Ukrainian officials believe that Iskander ballistic missiles equipped with cluster munitions were used for the attack. Cluster munitions, also known as “steel rain,” are weapons designed to cause mass casualties. These munitions explode in the air, releasing submunitions that result in widespread destruction. Andriy Kostin, the prosecutor general of Ukraine, criticized the decision to use such destructive weapons, claiming that they were used “deliberately to kill as many Ukrainian civilians as possible.” Cluster munitions are banned in 120 countries due to their highly destructive nature, notably to civilians. These countries signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008, promising not to make, use, transfer, or stockpile weapons. However, the United States (U.S.), Russia, and Ukraine are not part of the treaty. Both Russia and Ukraine have used cluster munitions in the war.
E-Commerce: The New Era Begins

E-commerce, known as online shopping, refers to the buying and selling of goods and services through the internet. With the emergence of personal computer communication, big Korean e-commerce brands, such as Interpark and Lotte, E-Commerce, first surfaced in June 1996. Since then, people have started actively establishing online stores and companies such as Cafe 24 and MakeShop, which helped Korean market. They are growing at speed, with their high competence achieved through price discrimination and active advertisement. In this way, e-commerce has settled itself as an essential service in many people’s lives.

Transcending Offline Shopping

Currently, the size of the e-commerce market has continued to grow, surpassing offline shopping. According to 2024 data from the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy (MOTIE), e-commerce stores have taken up 50.5% of total distribution sales, surpassing offline stores for the first time in 2023. The most significant factor was the internet breaking the limits of space and time. Using internet shopping eliminates the need to travel to make purchases; therefore, it lessens the burden on consumers, particularly in terms of time, transportation costs, and energy. Also, online shopping has an advantage in terms of customer satisfaction and convenience. Major e-commerce platforms such as Naver allow consumers to easily see complex processes in one view. Furthermore, with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), e-commerce companies recommend customized goods based on customers’ preferences and detailed requirements. Currently, with the consumers’ increasing interest in cross-border shopping, they also make use of overseas e-commerce services that make purchases much more convenient. These consumer-friendly functions surpassing the limits of offline purchases have supported the successful growth of e-commerce.

E-Commerce’s Uncertain Tomorrow

Last January, the monetary value of online shopping mall transactions exceeded over W227 trillion, according to Statistics Korea. Since many Koreans now choose to shop online, the e-commerce market has grown to a significant scale. However, its recent growth has faced many problems. Thus, the Sungkyunkwan Times (SKT) will examine the current issues and the expected future of the e-commerce market in Korea.

Unveiling the History of Online Shopping

E-commerce has allowed consumers to enjoy cross-border shopping, which means people can buy overseas products directly online. Subsequently, overseas online shopping businesses, such as AliExpress and Temu, were introduced into the Korean market. They are growing at speed, with their high competence achieved through price discrimination and active advertisement. In this way, e-commerce has settled itself as an essential service in many people’s lives.

Wallowing in the Swamp of Muted Growth

E-commerce market is now recording high sales, however, its growth rate is not as high. In fact, according to a report by The Korea Economic Daily released last December, the e-commerce market has faced a downturn, with the growth rate declining from 18.4% in 2020 to 9.5% in 2023. The increasing demand for offline malls with the end of the pandemic and the freezing of consumer confidence due to inflation and recession significantly decreased online purchase rates. Moreover, major e-commerce enterprises such as Coupang and Naver Shopping have formed an oligopoly, which creates other significant obstacles. In 2024, according to the Opensurvey, the market share of Coupang and Naver Shopping is 24.3% and 23.3%, respectively, with the two companies accounting for half of the market. This market structure can lead to problems such as price increases, which raise the burden on consumers. This year, Coupang grappled with controversy because they increased the price of the Wow membership, including free delivery service, from W4,990 up to W7,890 by using their dominating position in the market. Although the company added more benefits to the membership, consumers still complained about price increases, which were not in line with the quality of the service. However, despite this escalation of customer dissatisfaction, in an interview with SKT, an e-commerce consumer said, “As Coupang provides irreplaceable service with various products and services, I always end up using Coupang.” Due to this disconnection and decrease in e-commerce market demand, the market is now facing a severe crisis.

Overseas E-Commerce Crashing Domestic Market

Apart from the disputes in domestic e-commerce, cross-border e-commerce, which has earned significant consumption from Korean consumers, indirectly causes the market share of domestic e-commerce companies to shrink. Since cross-border e-commerce is exempt from transit tax, it benefits from significant advantages in price competition. Moreover, cross-border e-commerce cannot prove its safety because of the exemption in Korea Certification (KC). In September 2021, according to the Maeil Business Newspaper,
children’s toys on the Amazon Global Store are now being sold without the KC marking. Due to this lax regulation, Korean customers may be affected by unregulated products. For instance, in the April analysis of Incheon Main Customs (IMC), one out of four products from Chinese e-commerce contained harmful substances, such as cadmium and lead, at least 10 to 700 times higher than the Korean safety standards. Also, Temu, one of the most influential Chinese e-commerce businesses, has a dispute on providing customers’ personal information to the Chinese Government, which has become more controversial.

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**For Trustworthy Cross-Border E-Commerce**

The lenient regulations on overseas e-commerce affecting Korean companies and consumers should be addressed. First, supporting Korean domestic companies facing disadvantages in price competition due to the absence of transit tax and KC marking requirements for overseas e-commerce is imperative. For this, the government can reduce the cost of the inspection for the certificated KC marks. By decreasing the financial burden on Korean e-commerce companies, this governmental support would cause them to lower their product prices, which were initially high due to the expensive KC marks. This solution would put Korean companies in a relatively equal position as overseas e-commerce platforms in price competition. Furthermore, discussing the controversy regarding toxic substances in overseas e-commerce is also important. In April 2024, the FTC reported that it would identify the scale of damage by implementing a factual survey regarding toxic substances in overseas e-commerce.

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**Cookies**

Internet cookies are small pieces of data sent from a website that are stored on a user’s domain by the user’s web browser. The term ‘cookie’ is derived from “magic cookie,” a concept in the computing field that refers to pieces of information sent and received through the internet. The original purpose of cookies was to be a reliable mechanism for websites to remember user information or to record browsing activities. Cookies offer substantial benefits that enhance and extend the user’s web browsing experience even after the browser is closed, while persistent cookies keep the data even after the browser is closed. As such, internet cookies are crucial in enhancing the user’s web browsing experience and optimizing website functionality.

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**Request**

Cookies are categorized into two types: first-party and third-party cookies. First-party cookies are directly set by the website that a user is visiting, while third-party cookies are set by another domain. Cookies can also be categorized by duration; session cookies are deleted when the browser is closed, while persistent cookies keep the data even after the browser is closed. Cookies are crucial in enhancing the user’s web browsing experience and optimizing website functionality.

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**What Makes a Good Cookie?**

Cookies offer substantial benefits that enhance and personalize the internet experience in many ways. One of the advantages of cookies is their role in facilitating personalized browsing experiences. Cookies enable websites to remember user preferences, such as theme settings, language choices, and even complex customizations on platforms such as online forums or news portals. This personalization makes navigation more intuitive and aligned to individual wants and needs. Additionally, cookies are pivotal in the realm of targeted advertising. They enable advertising customization, which allows users to see advertisements that are more relevant to their interests.
likely to be relevant to their interests. This customization not only enhances user experience by reducing irrelevant content but also increases the effectiveness of advertisements for businesses. Cookies also greatly enhance convenience through information storage and auto-fill capabilities.

For regular users of e-commerce sites or services that require logging in, cookies make these processes faster by remembering login states and auto-filling personal and payment information.

Sensitive data, leading to unauthorized access to personal habits, preferences, and personal data, they can lead to a massive collection of personal information without the user's consent.

Cookies can facilitate identity theft, financial fraud, and other malicious activities.

Bad Cookies

Despite internet cookies' advantages, they pose significant risks related to privacy breaches and potential misuse. Most websites prompt users to accept these tracking mechanisms, often with a simple "accept all" button that many click without a second thought. This ease of acceptance has led to a lack of awareness about how personal information is used and shared online. Accordingly, privacy infringement is one of the most glaring issues associated with cookies. Since cookies track detailed information about user's browsing habits, preferences, and personal data, they can lead to a massive collection of personal information without the users' complete understanding, often stored in databases that could become targets for data breaches. Cookies can also be particularly vulnerable to specific types of cyber-attack. For instance, cybercriminals can hijack cookies and extract sensitive data, leading to unauthorized access to personal information and user accounts. In 2020, an American health insurance company's customers' cookies were hijacked, leaking personal information to hackers. Similarly, session hijacking can occur when attackers intercept cookies to steal authentication tokens, allowing them unauthorized access to users' sessions. The prolonged retention of information in cookies further exacerbates these risks. Persistent cookies remain on a user's device for an extended period, sometimes indefinitely, making them a goldmine for cybercriminals. Such cookies can facilitate identity theft, financial fraud, and other malicious activities.

Cookies Vulnerable to Hacking

What was once an essential tool for user tracking and website personalization, internet cookies are now being increasingly viewed as a relic of older web technology. In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, more advanced and secure technologies are replacing the capabilities of cookies. One significant drawback is their size limitation; cookies are typically restricted to around 4KB per cookie. This size constraint limits the amount of data that can be stored, making cookies unsuitable for more complex or data-intensive applications. Another functional issue arises when cookies are sent with every HTTP request to the server, which can lead to increased latency in web applications.

This overhead is particularly problematic for high-traffic websites where reducing unnecessary data transfer is crucial for performance optimization. A data scientist at LG Display explained, "Cookies are a step behind the current technology. They are not as smart or useful anymore." As the internet continues to evolve, the shift from cookies toward these more sophisticated technologies indicates a significant transformation in how user data is handled and utilized across websites.

Reject All

The tech industry must strive to innovate with more secure alternatives in response to the significant privacy concerns associated with traditional internet cookies. Google's Privacy Sandbox is leading this change, offering tools such as Focused Learning of Cohorts (FLoC) to enable anonymous advertisement targeting without compromising personal privacy. FLoC aims to replace traditional cookie-based tracking methods by grouping users into cohorts based on similar browsing behaviors. This method allows advertisers to target advertisements without directly accessing individual user data, effectively anonymizing personal information yet still delivering relevant advertising. Furthermore, legislation regarding the data security of cookies must be established. For example, the General Data Protection Regulation in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act in the United States (U.S.) push for stricter consent requirements and more robust data protection practices. These regulations compel companies to be more transparent about their data usage, including cookies, and ensure they have legitimate grounds for data collection, thus enhancing privacy protections. In line with this increased use of consent management platforms that provide users with more detailed control over what cookies allow on their devices is necessary. These platforms go beyond the simple "accept all" button, offering granular choices for different types of cookies and explaining their purposes clearly. By integrating these new technologies and adhering to stringent regulatory standards, the industry can effectively tackle the significant privacy issues historically associated with cookies.

Cookieless One Day

As the world moves toward a cookieless era, various innovative substitutes are being developed to replace traditional cookies. Now, many developers are turning to local storage to overcome the restrictive size limit of cookies. This change offers significantly greater storage capacity directly within the user's browser, allowing for more complex data storage without the performance penalties associated with sending data back to the server with each request. Furthermore, strategies like using HTTP/2 and WebSockets instead of cookies are becoming prevalent due to their high speed and efficiency in data transfer. HTTP/2 allows for multiplexing and server push, which reduces the number of connections needed and increases data transfer efficiency. On the other hand, WebSockets provide a two-way interactive communication session between the user's browser and the server, enabling data to be sent as soon as it is available without waiting for a request from the browser. The LG Display data scientist also commented, "The technical downsides of cookies must be overcome by replacing them with substitutes such as WebSockets, keeping the beneficial element of cookies while eliminating the shortcomings." By implementing these solutions, developers can ensure smoother, faster, and more secure user experiences, effectively bringing data management in line with current technological standards.

Cookies — they are not as sweet as they sound. Their future will depend on the success of true online privacy and information transparency. This ongoing transformation of cookies is not just a technical challenge but a significant opportunity to redefine digital ethics and user trust on a global scale. Kingos, keep an eye on the oven because a whole new batch of freshly baked cookies is about to be served.
Finding Light from the Ashes

On February 1st, two firefighters died on duty while extinguishing a fire at a factory in Mungyeong City. Following these line-of-duty deaths, 70,000 firefighters gathered and urged the government to improve working conditions. Questioning the current treatment of firefighters, the Sungkyun Times (SKT) aims to investigate the reality of firefighters' treatment and the ways for improvement.

History of Fire Protection

Fire protection refers to all activities that protect citizens' lives and properties from danger. Fire officials, commonly called firefighters, not only extinguish fires but also carry out a variety of tasks such as emergency patient transportation, helicopter rescue, computerization, and traffic control. Fire protection has firmly maintained its position, changing its form to protect the safety of the country and the people. Since the establishment of the Korean government in 1948, the fire service administration had been classified as a police affair, but in the 1970s, it became completely independent from the police. Since then, the fire service administration has been divided into state and local government. As the Fire Services Act was revised in the 1990s, the metropolitan areas settled, and the class system of fire officials was classified into state public officials and local public officials. In the 2000s, disasters such as diseases, typhoons, and subway fire accidents raised the need for fundamental disaster management, which prompted the opening of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The NEMA was reorganized as the Central Fire Service under the Ministry of Public Safety and Security to integrate and manage land and sea disasters. However, in 2017, with the restructuring of government organizations, the Central Fire Service was relaunched as the National Fire Agency (NFA), a general agency for land disasters.

Firefighting of the Day

The system, which was divided into state and local, was the basis for the development of modern fire protection; however, it faced the limit of inequality between regions. The budget allocated to fire protection varied depending on the financial conditions and interests of each local government. This disparity led to a regional gap in fire protection personnel, equipment, treatment, and even fire services. Accordingly, on April 1st, 2020, the government enacted and revised six major laws to prevent gaps in investment in fire protection and to prepare a system that provides equal fire services in every region. Due to this revision of the law, the dualized position of about 50,000 fire officials became recognized as state public officials. In addition, the fire security tax, previously composed of 20% of the individual consumption tax of cigarettes, was increased to 45% to make up for the insufficient budget for fire protection. A legal basis has also been established to support systematic treatments for fire officials who are repeatedly exposed to various risks and stresses. However, despite the revision of the law, many problems and criticisms still persist.

Remaining Gaps

Although the positions have changed from local to state public officials, the authority of budget and personnel remains subordinate to local governments. Therefore, the material treatments for fire protection, such as quality of equipment and manpower, are still different among regions. According to the NFA in 2023, the proportion of the local budget in the Special Account for Firefighting Services was 87.6%, suggesting that local governments, with poor expenditure conditions, could not provide sufficient support. As a result, state support is required to fill the insufficient local budget, but in reality, the only budget support set aside for firefighters by the central government is the fire security tax. However, even the fire security tax cannot sufficiently fulfill the budget. According to the Korea Institute of Local Taxation in 2023, the proportion of the local budget in the fire and safety sectors, respectively, to cover the investment requirements. The gap in budget between regions also leads to the problem of manpower imbalance. According to National Assemblyman Oh Yeong-hwan, the average shortage rate of firefighting personnel compared to the legal standards was 10.10%. With this lack of workforce, some regions have an even higher shortage rate. South Jeolla Province's shortage rate was 23.54%, and Ulsan City's was 21.47%. The Korean Fire Safety Government Employees' Union (KFSU) said in an interview with the SKT, "The budget for firefighting power management depends on the local government's budget, so if the budget is relatively insufficient, the manpower gap worsens, leading to a significant safety gap."

Siren from Firefighters

Although fire officials are putting out fires to protect the country, their poor working conditions and treatment remain the same. Fire officials are easily exposed to mental trauma due to harrowing sights on the scene of accidents. The KFSU said, "Firefighters who witness various disasters have mental issues caused by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as they face unexpected deaths." According to the 2023 survey conducted by the NFA, 43.9% of fire officials are suffering from at least one of the four major psychological disorders, including PTSD, depression, sleep disorders, and problem drinking. Threathing due to the stressful nature of the job, assistance from professional counselors is particularly essential. However, only 48 counselors exist for 63,960 fire officials, according to the Outreach Counseling in 2023. Moreover, despite the lack of an actual job, there is a significant lack of respect and support for this honorable profession. At the annual Fire Service Memorial Ceremony from 2004 to 2023, supported by the NFA, the state respected fire officials with its words but did not support with an increase in budget. This contradicts the purpose of the ceremony, which is to honor the sacrifices.
of fire officials who died in the line of duty. Former president of the Korea Fire Safety Institute, Kang Tae-suk, told the SKT, “Social respect and recognition for firefighters who died in the line of duty are still lacking. Some people even underestimate the importance of firefighting.” This lack of treatment reduces the pride and morale of fire officials.

Extinguishing the Flames

Complete State Public Officials

To close the gap between regions, refining the current half-state positions through complete independence of the fire service is necessary. The central government and the NFA, not local governments, should be responsible for securing budget and personnel rights for fire protection. One fire official told the SKT, “If the NFA brings budget and personnel rights, it will reduce the gap between regions due to the unification of budget payments.” Above all, it is necessary to secure finances stably by expanding insufficient financial resources, such as the fire security tax, through the efforts of the National Assembly and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Equal and sufficient budget distribution will lead to equal personnel supplements and equal safety in the country. The KFSA mentioned that “if fire officials become complete state public officials, they would be able to respond quickly to reports by resolving the shortage of manpower and could use vacations without worrying.”

Heal the True Heroes

Due to the nature of the job, mental support programs such as Firefighters Trauma 119 Academy, currently being conducted for 18 fire officials, should be expanded. The increase of now an insufficient number of psychological counseling experts is also imperative, while specialist counselors for firefighters must be trained on a national level. Notably, sufficiently respectful treatment corresponding to the dangerous duties of firefighters should be provided. In the United States (U.S.), firefighters are the most admired job of elementary school students and the second most satisfying job. Korea should also strengthen the universal public perception of respect for firefighters. The government should, therefore, give the maximum courtesy to those who have died while protecting the people and the country; such as granting the Order of National Security Merit to them and allocating budgets for memorial ceremonies. Moreover, citizens should contribute to building a social atmosphere in which the whole country rightfully respects firefighters. In an interview with the SKT, fire official Kim Jong-kwon said, “I believe that if citizens recognize and support our honor and pride, our welfare and treatment could gradually improve.”

Behind the Wheel: Elderly Drivers

Increasing Age, Escalating Danger

The number of drivers aged 65 or older who are classified as elderly drivers has rapidly increased in South Korea. According to the Korean National Police Agency (KNPA) last March, the number of elderly drivers rose by approximately 40% from about 3.3 million in 2019 to about 4.7 million in 2023. Among these drivers, the number of drivers who are 75 or older surpassed 1 million for the first time in history. Such a steep incline has significantly influenced the road, as indicated by the Korea Road Traffic Authority (KoRoad).

In March, it was revealed that accidents caused by elderly drivers increased from 2020 to 2022 and accounted for roughly 17% of the total accidents in 2022. One main factor that contributes to these accidents is physical aging. Due to hearing and vision loss, elderly drivers are more likely to miss critical sound signals and visual stimuli on the road. Another reason that elderly drivers are prone to traffic accidents is cognitive decline. In an interview with the SKT, Kim Hui-seong (Sophomore, Department of Police Administration, Dongguk University) commented, “Compared to younger drivers, elderly drivers display poorer abilities in hazard recognition and avoidance, so they are often unable to act instantly in dangerous situations.” As South Korea is on the verge of becoming a super-aged society, the issues regarding
elderly drivers are attracting more public attention than ever.

**Current Regulation Policies**

Today, several policies by the government, local authorities, and various institutes ensure the safety of elderly drivers. First, Article 87 of the Road Traffic Act requires that drivers with a Class 2 license go through the license renewal process, which includes a driving aptitude evaluation and safety training every five years after age 65 and every three years after age 75. Additionally, based on Article 93 of the act, local authorities have run a program to promote voluntary license returns since 2018. This program delivers a one-time financial reward for elderly drivers who voluntarily return their licenses and is expected to significantly reduce the number of elderly drivers. Lastly, educational programs are held in numerous locations across the country, delivering practical knowledge for preventing accidents, such as road safety guidelines and analyses of various traffic accident cases. For instance, a series of personal consulting sessions for elderly drivers was conducted in Muju County in North Jeolla Province last March. KoRoad has also organized annual traffic safety expert classes at local senior centers since 2016. However, there are opposing views on whether regulatory policies should be strengthened beyond this level.

**Safety First and Foremost**

Conversely, some emphasize that driving is closely related to fundamental rights and thus disagree with expanding regulations. With stricter regulations, the livelihood of elderly drivers, including taxi and delivery drivers, could be negatively impacted. The Korea Transportation Safety Authority (KOTSA) revealed this March that in 2023, the number of elderly taxi drivers was close to 45% of the total count of taxi drivers. Also, according to the KOTSA, the average number of buses per operating route was 4.27 in urban areas but only 0.47 in rural areas in 2022. Therefore, driving may be essential for elderly residents of such regions with limited public transportation. Moreover, current regulations apply the same age standard to all elderly drivers, which may be unfair to those who can drive as competently as young drivers. For instance, in an interview with The New Daily this March, 72-year-old delivery driver Yoo commented, "My age does not cause major problems while I am driving, so I cannot understand why the elderly are urged to return their driver’s licenses." Modern-day advances in medical care have considerably increased the number of healthy elders; thus, it seems unreasonable to evaluate the entire elderly population based solely on age.

**Beyond the Horizon: A Safer Road for Everyone**

**Bridging the Gap**

Considering both opinions, a compromised method of expanding regulations is needed. Essentially, it is reasonable to flexibly subdivide the license renewal period and procedure to evaluate elderly drivers accurately. In New Zealand, drivers over 80 must renew their license every two years and receive a doctor’s confirmation in the process. Second, conditional licenses could be effective for the elderly who wish to continue driving. This system is currently being implemented in other countries, such as the United States (U.S.) and Germany, explicitly restricting the areas and times in which elderly people can drive according to their performance in periodic driving tests. As elderly drivers are evaluated not by age but by driving ability, conditional licenses are fair for everyone. Meanwhile, incentives for returning licenses should be expanded to aid those who can no longer drive. In Japan, elderly drivers who return their licenses receive long-term benefits, such as free shopping delivery services and higher banking interest rates. As for South Korea, one noteworthy example is the W100 Taxi welfare system in Naju City of South Jeolla Province, a program that resolved the inconvenience of transportation in rural areas by offering W100 taxi fares for residents 70 and above. As there are many options for regulating elderly drivers, it is imperative that the government actively puts them to use.

**Navigating the Future of Elderly Driving**

The utmost priority in the upcoming super-aged society is creating a social atmosphere that embraces elderly drivers while addressing safety issues through various approaches other than the legal system. For one, the development of technology is expected to reduce the risk of accidents. Last February, the Samsung Traffic Safety Research Institute found that elderly people who drive cars equipped with an Advanced Emergency Braking System (AEBS) had a 22.5% lower accident rate than those who did not. Although AEBS installation has been legally required for vehicles manufactured domestically since 2023, only a few elderly drivers drive such cars because not many tend to buy new vehicles. Therefore, government support is necessary. In Japan, elderly drivers who purchase new vehicles with AEBS are offered a subsidy of up to ¥900,000, along with a 9% discount on vehicle insurance. Improving the driving environment itself is another task, and installing more illuminated road signs and anti-slip pavements will enhance the safety of all drivers on the road. Sensing-friendly construction standards are critical in areas such as intersections, where elderly drivers are especially prone to accidents. Securing both the freedom and safety of elderly drivers is an essential assignment to guarantee a tomorrow every day.
A New Title: K-Literature

K-literature, otherwise known as a short term for Korean literature, was recently coined due to the increasing gain in positive attention from readers abroad. The globalization of Korean literature began with the development of translations. The first book exported from Korea was Le Printemps Parfumé, the French version of a Korean folktale, Chunhyangjeon, translated in 1892 by Hong Jong-u. Since the establishment of the Korea Culture and Arts Foundation in 1973, the government has led the translation of Korean literature. Then, in 2001, the Literature Translation Institute of Korea (LTI), an institution responsible for the worldwide exchange and marketing of Korean literature, was founded under the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST), leading to further explorations into other Asian countries. Later, some Korean literary works started gaining positive reviews from Western judges, signified through many prestigious awards. In 2016, author Han Kang received the International Booker Prize for her work The Vegetarian, which was a monumental event in the history of Korean literature. Marking the first win by an Asian author, the book has sold more than 160,000 copies in 13 languages. In the 2020s, Korean literature has become more popular in diverse forms of media content. The production of many Korean movies and dramas on Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has successfully expanded the audience of Korean literature. In fact, according to the LTI, 60 literary works have been sold abroad from 2018 to 2022.

The Antagonists of K-Literature

The Unbearable Lightness of Infrastructure

Despite the increasing popularity of Korean literature, the poor infrastructure hinders its successful exportation. Primarily, the importance of translation, which is the first step of globalization, is overlooked. In July 2023, the government inspected the LTI and revealed that there are several existing problems, such as a lack of fairness and poor business management. In the case of the Translation and Publication Grants for Overseas Publishers Project, the books that were up for judgment were provided on the day of review, impeding the impartiality of the reviewing process. During the Publication Grants for Domestic Publishers Project in 2021, only 1 out of 14 complete publishing cases was locally published, indicating defects in the following management after the initial translation. Moreover, the conflict between the two organizations involved in the export of Korean literature, the MCST and the Korean Publishers Association (KPA), is also a serious issue. The long-lasting conflict first sparked in 2003 regarding the fixed book price policy, then intensified at the 61st Bologna Children’s Book Fair held in Italy in April 2023, as the two organizations operated separate booths. Likewise, the lack of translation support and conflicts among organizations indicate the current flaws of the export environment that hamper the international success of Korean literature.

No Room of One’s Own

Apart from the defects in the direct components that affect the export of K-literature, there are some fundamental pitfalls within the Korean literature community. First, the current debut route of new authors requires the winning of annual spring literary contest or literary awards hosted by magazine companies. This narrow path to an official debut contributes to cultivating qualified authors; however, it indirectly forms a power structure within the field of literature. Specifically, the unstable copyright of award-winning works, such as the Yi Sang Literary Award that transfers copyright to the publisher for three years, can exploit rookie writers. Rookie writers also face the problem of implicit pressure to follow the pre-existing trend, as it seems easier to debut that way. Consequently, it may lead to the elimination of unique styles and themes, reducing the overall diversity of the field of literature. This tendency is ironic, as a foreign reader of Korean literature told the SKT, “Various genres and experimental style of writing were pinpointed as the main reasons for one’s preference.” Moreover, the Korean publishing industry

A Cover to Judge

By Han So-yun

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This January, the author Lee Geum-yi was shortlisted for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and as well as author Hwang Sok-yong for the International Booker Prize in May. The public’s interest in the globalization of Korean literature has soared following these recent achievements of the authors. However, problems within the Korean literature community can still be found, potentially hindering its globalization process. Thus, the Sungkyun Times (SKT) will uncover these obstacles and their solutions.
is currently facing instability due to the sudden cut of budgets allocated to the MCST in 2024. In fact, in March, there was a full reduction of subsidies for vitalizing the publication of excellent content, which was worth W1.3 billion. Such budget cuts will inevitably destabilize the foundation of Korean literature, which will further lead to the hindrance of successful globalization.

**Happily Ever After**

*For a Rigid Infrastructure*

Improving the current translation process must be the highest priority to strengthen the current infrastructure. First, there must be a systematic change in the Korean Literature Translation Institute (KLT). Since the original problem came to the surface through the 2023 ministry inspection, solid and regular monitoring is necessary to ensure a fair assessment in giving grants. This monitoring system will improve the international and domestic publisher support programs, providing more substantial support for the translation industry. Furthermore, there must be an increase in the number of professionals who can correctly convey the authors’ intentions of the original Korean text. The translator must maintain the author’s intentional use of literary techniques, such as omitting conjunctions between short sentences or mixing active and passive tense in a series of sentences. Moreover, to resolve the conflict between the KPA and the MCST, reassessment of KPW accounting methods is imperative. The interests of both parties must be aligned by having a standardized method of setting proceeds and being transparent about this process. Additionally, constant monitoring is required to prevent the government from abusing authority on budget cuts. Political parties and advocacies should regularly check budget changes and related problems by setting agendas and organizing forums. Likewise, efforts to improve the export environment of Korean literature are crucial.

**Revitalizing the Homeground**

There must be an internal innovation regarding the current debut system to promote the active exportation of Korean literature. Additional channels for Korean literature other than the existing contests are crucial for this purpose. For example, it is possible to boost independent literary magazines where smaller writers can freely share their writings. A student who regularly enjoys Moonbak3, a poetry magazine, told the SKT, “One of the merits of these magazines is the opportunity to find unfamiliar yet extraordinary works by smaller writers.” Another way is to use online writing and publishing platforms to discover new, unique, and creative perspectives. Furthermore, reviving sufficient financial support is necessary to restore the overall publishing industry. A stable base in the domestic market can encourage further globalization. However, since the budget has already been cut, exportation could be encouraged by focusing on media content. In fact, the government has doubled the investment of the K-content sector to W930 billion. Narratives from Korean literary works can be transformed into webtoons, games, and movies as content intellectual property (IP). Thus, by ensuring diversity within the current Korean literature society, Korean literature can achieve successful globalization.

Many different events are scheduled in Korea where foreign publishers, agencies, and readers can freely exchange Korean literature works, including the 2024 Seoul International Book Fair in June and the K-culture Festival in July. In the long term, solving the current problems of Korean literature may be the starting point for true globalization. Kingos, pay attention to these events and watch the beauty of Korean literature spread throughout the world.©

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**Liberated in Haebangchon**

Haebangchon, a town overlooking Seoul City’s Yongan 2-ga and 1-ga town districts, directly translates to “Liberation Village.” As can be inferred from its name, this neighborhood initially served as a residential area for Koreans returning from abroad after the Japanese colonial period and North Korean refugees after the Korean War. At the time, such settlements were often built in elevated areas where the moon could be seen up close as rent prices were relatively low, earning them the nickname “moon village.” As years passed, the once populated Haebangchon was eventually left sparse by residents moving away for financial opportunities in other areas of the city. However, with the dawn of the new millennium, residents from nearby areas, such as Itaewon, started to move to Haebangchon. This was to flee from rising rental costs caused by gentrification, but it simultaneously brought life back to the area. Still characterized by its hilly alleyways, Haebangchon now bears an uncanny charm, allowing visitors to traverse the seamless blend of the past and present. Thanks to its location at the foot of Nam San Mountain, the area also boasts a close-up view of the iconic landmark, the N Seoul Tower, making it a popular destination for chasing views.

**How to Visit**

From the Humanities and Social Sciences Campus (HSSC), Kingos can get on the 413 bus at the Myeonggye 3-ga Sungkyunkwan Univ. Entrance bus stop (01003). After getting off at the Lotte Dept. Store (02140), transfer to the 202 bus, and reach the Huam-dong Bus Terminal stop (03204). This route takes around 50 minutes. Kingos departing from the Natural Sciences Campus (NSC) can take Line 1 from the nearby Sungkyunkwan Univ. Station to the Namyoung Station. From there, get on the Yongan

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**Kingo Walk**

*2023 Seoul International Book Fair*

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*Liberal artist, Sibyong Kim*

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*By Im Eun-so
  eunso.im@g.skku.edu*
Intertwining of the Past and Present

A Page of History

The first destination that Kingos can explore is the 108 Stairway, one of the last remaining traces of Haebangchon's dark past. During the Japanese occupation, this staircase functioned as a pathway up to the Gyeongseong Hoguk Shrine, which was built to house fallen Japanese soldiers. However, only the 108 Stairway remains and is used to travel to and from the main Haebangchon area. Instead of going up the stairs, Kingos may choose to ride the inclined elevator in between the staircase that was constructed to aid the elderly residents. Afterward, Kingos can immerse themselves in a peaceful neighborhood of residential homes and small mom-and-pop stores. Tucked away within its hilly streets is an independent bookshop, Storage Book and Film. The space is intimate and full of books that are carefully curated selection of bestsellers, indie books, and unique postcards, one can pick up a title that speaks to the heart and get lost within the pages of the author’s written past. This can be a wonderful opportunity to find a book that best represents the moment, as it will forever become a memory to cherish.

Discovering the Meaning of Being Present

The next stop in Kingos’ walk is an exhibition, THE WALL. Located in what was once the gallery director’s newlywed home, the place was renovated to showcase pieces that symbolize significant moments in his life. This project was brought to life after the director was inspired by the Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, who built a museum of installations representing different events and characters in his novel, The Museum of Innocence. Before visiting, Kingos must make a reservation through the Naver Booking system and pay the ticket price of ¥9,700. At the entrance, a classical melody and a complimentary cup of tea will welcome the guests. To begin the exhibition, one can proceed to the starting point and open the audiovisual guide. While observing countless memorabilia, artworks, and spaces representative of the director’s experiences and mental state at the time, visitors will naturally find themselves deep in thought. Gaining a newfound appreciation for human life, Kingos will then head to the next spot, Nuldam Space café. Open from noon to 8 p.m. every day, this café offers customers the space to write a letter to their future selves. Accompanied by the letter-filled wall that holds the hopes and regrets of thousands, explore the echoes that fill up one’s mind and transfer them to paper. Finally, melt the wax seal over the envelope to enclose a time capsule of the fleeting present.

A Future Brighter than the Skyline

As the mid-day heat turns into an afternoon breeze, head to the Shinheung Art Market. Although it had a different name in the past, this market served as a center of commercial activity in the 70s and 80s when the area was home to over 300 textile factories. However, rapid industrialization left a lingering effect, causing their impact to trickle down to the market and leaving the vibrant hub dull and quiet. In recent years, there have been efforts to restore the market and regain its lively atmosphere. Now, the harmonious clashes between the worn-down building backdrop and modern spaces have made it a hot spot among the younger generation that enjoys reimagining retro trends with fresh takes. While exploring the Shinheung Art Market, Kingos may visit Com Com Arcade, which has several arcade games that give the younger population a fun opportunity to experience the childhood of the people before them.

Afterward, Kingos can proceed to the market exit, where a dessert café, Le Monblanc, is located nearby. This adorable café is primarily known for its cakes in the shape of yarn balls and knitted sweaters — an artistic ode to the market’s past, available in various flavors for the youth to enjoy.

A Meal with a Side of Seoul City

With a heart full of nostalgia and a desire for reinvention, it is time for Kingos to satisfy their appetites. There is no better way to enjoy a meal in Haebangchon than alongside a panoramic view of the Seoul City skyline. Grab a seat at The 100 Food Trucks Burger and Pine Wine Bar. Taste the masterfully crafted glass of cocktail and fall deep into conversation, drowning out the sounds of clinking glasses and softly playing music in the background. At this moment, Kingos will realize that the feeling of liberation may not be so far away after all. Rather, it is found in brief moments nestled among the hustle and bustle of daily life and within the shared laughter that a good space and company can provide.

Wrapping up the semester, take a moment away from the monotony of the long commutes and the pressures of life. With the vast cityscape right before one’s eyes, witness concerns slowly disappear, just like the tiny glimmers of light that shape it. Kingos, it is time to turn the first page of one’s liberation diaries at Haebangchon and discover what it truly means to be free.
London is one of the world’s most charming historical and cultural centers, captivating a countless number of tourists each year. When one imagines this city, the image of Harry Potter fighting with Voldemort with his magic wand or the stereotypical image of British ladies and gentlemen enjoying afternoon tea in a street café may come to mind. This is London, where such fantasies and ideals come to life. Beyond its renowned landmarks, the city boasts a multitude of other forms of beauty. In the center of the city, visitors can take a break in Green Park, which is always filled with children’s laughter. As one walks around the park, it soon becomes nighttime, and a new world of night scenes begins to unfold. Come and enjoy the beautiful city of London with the Sungkyun Times!
Meeting someone who shares the same interests is always thrilling. However, in a world with such a variety of preferences, it takes work to casually meet and spend time with similar people. Therefore, The Glow Festival 2024, where 10,000 people gathered and glowed with their love for music, was truly precious. The festival was more than just a place to listen to music. Music stimulates emotion, leaves a lingering impact, and serves as a beautiful gathering, connecting diverse individuals from different backgrounds.

**The Glow Forever**

**A New Glow**

The Glow 2024 is a music festival launched for the first time this year. It took place over two days, on April 13th and 14th, and featured 26 artists. The festival was held at the KINTEX Exhibition Hall 2 in Ilsanseo District, an indoor venue that recently gained attention in Korea for hosting concerts for global artists like Post Malone. The festival was organized by WanderLoch, a renowned event planning company responsible for directing the performances of the Japanese duo band YOSASOBI in Korea. The organizers adopted conventional festival management styles, like those of Pentaport and Busan Rock Festival. Two stages, STAGE 37 and STAGE 126, were built to allow a larger audience to enjoy a variety of artists in a comfortable environment. Furthermore, they featured a unique design by collaborating with the design studio Okens for art direction. In addition, there were photo zones, food and beverage (F&B) booths, experience booths, and resting areas for a diverse experience. The festival was filled with 600 minutes of live performances and received high praise with its lineup, including Silca Gel, winner of Best Modern Rock at the 2023 Korean Music Awards, Thranggelen, which recently hinted at new moves with a change of band members, and Jannabi, a representative group sound of Korea with charming melodies and a solid fanbase.

**The Party Begins Now**

**Exploring the Stage**

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<th>Headliners, the Best of the Best</th>
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<td>Lee Seung-yoon, Zion T, 10cm, and Jannabi</td>
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The headliners for the two days of The Glow Festival were Lee Seung-yoon, Zion T, 10cm, and Jannabi. A notably impressive performance was by group sound Jannabi, who delivered a remarkable emotional impact on the audience. The excitement of the artists and the audience echoed the festival since this was Jannabi’s first offline performance after almost a year. Jannabi’s performance was expertly crafted based on their extensive experience and professionalism, with their stage presentation delicately designed to flow with the music and engage the audience. Their song ‘Hong Kong’, depicting the youth trying to escape from life’s strangeness, transported the audience to a foreign street filled with unreadable signs. The band’s frontman, Chit Jungsun, turned into Tarzan for the song ‘Jungle’, taking the audience on an adventure through the forest. Their performance transformed the KINTEX Exhibition Hall into an Amazon jungle, leading up to the show’s climax. The audience collided with their relaxed stage presence and jazzy music. Despite their first performance in Korea, their relaxed stage presence and jazzy music received high praise with their first performance in Korea and captivated the audience with their relaxed stage presence and jazzy music. Despite most audience members hearing their music for the first time, the catchy melodies and impressive trumpet play in the song ‘Inner Me’ transformed the hot, enclosed venue into a harmonious blend of audio and visuals that left a deep impression on the audience.

**Surprising Supports**

- Yoon Ji-young performed an impressive performance on STAGE 37 by distinguishing herself from other artists with her calm tone and soft musical style. Yoon Ji-young captivated the audience with her stage presence, immersing the audience in her musical world. Her performance, where she sang cross-legged on stage, was highlighted by her song ‘Bluebird’, featuring sweet melodies and emotional lyrics that captured the audience’s heart. The stage was perfectly set with sensational visual effects and lighting, creating a harmonious blend of audio and visuals that left a deep impression on the audience.

- Jannabi, who delivered a harmonious blend of audio and visuals that left a deep impression on the audience.

**Front Stage Review**

One aspect of The Glow 2024 that received the best response from festivalgoers was the stage setup. Unlike other festivals, The Glow was held indoors, allowing for a more intimate production of lighting and screen effects. In particular, the screens opening sideways to reveal the artists received warm reactions from the audience. Alongside the stage setup, the broad arrangement of the two stages allowed both artists and the audience to roam freely, overcoming the limitations of an enclosed indoor festival. Additionally, the F&B booths garnered many positive responses, with the Kimchi-rolled noodles being the most praised item for refreshing and comforting the weary attendees. The menu was priced at $9,000, breaking the stereotype of festival food being tasteless and expensive.

**How Was The Glow 2024?**

The Glow 2024 was more than just a place to listen to music. Music stimulates emotion, leaves a lingering impact, and allows the audience to experience deep contemplation and joy, thus making their lives glow. The Glow 2024 provided unforgettable memories to its attendees, along with the passion and talent of numerous artists.
The Cost of Overtourism

Overtourism is a phenomenon where the number of tourists exceeds the capacity of a location, causing negative impacts on the locals and the environment. The term was first used in 2012 by Professor Harold Goodwin of Manchester Metropolitan University in his research on the problems of European cities struggling with tourism. For instance, Venice has a population of 50,000 in the city center but has 30 million annual tourists, which makes it one of the world's most overtouristed cities. European cities, including Barcelona in Spain, Prague in the Czech Republic, and Hallstatt in Austria, suffer from overtourism. This phenomenon can be observed not only in European countries but also in South Korea. The influx of tourists to popular tourist destinations, such as Bukchon Hanok Village in Seoul City and Gamcheon Culture Village in Busan City, has led to complaints from nearby residents about noise pollution and destruction.

The conventional understanding is that tourism positively impacts a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, overtourism can have a destructive effect on a country's ecosystem and economy. The most significant consequence of overtourism is the depletion of resources and the destruction of the surrounding environment. Excessive tourism in an area causes an overconsumption of limited resources, littering, and destruction of natural ecosystems. The increasing use of shared accommodation services such as Airbnb has led to an accumulation of waste and the reporting of littering. Furthermore, disrupting the stability of a nation's economy is a significant concern, with inflation threatening its stability. The rising demand for tourism-related goods has led to an increase in prices, placing a burden on locals in their daily lives. The depreciation of the Japanese currency, the yen, has recently led to a rise in the number of tourists traveling to Japan, contributing to uncontrollable inflation.

Major travel destinations have adopted three policies to address the problem of overtourism. These policies include implementing restrictions on the number of visitors, introducing a tourism tax, and establishing a time limit for tourism. In 2018, Boracay Island in the Philippines was closed for approximately six months to facilitate the repair of damage caused by environmental pollution and ecosystem degradation. After the island's restoration, they restricted the number of tourists and activities. Since April, Venice has implemented a city entrance fee of €5 per adult to prevent further threats to the aquatic city's heritage. Despite such policies, the issue of overtourism persists, indicating a need for a more effective solution. There must be preservation methods for tourism facilities to protect the natural environment. Additionally, developing new tourism sites and marketing visitor attractions in neighboring cities can further diversify the local tourism industry. The issue is the management of the flow of people,” stated Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization. Both an excess and a deficiency of tourists present challenges. The question is, what is the right balance between the two?
Thank you for another semester with the Sungkyun Times!