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EDITORIAL

S&T in South Korea

In the wake of two catastrophic events—the Japanese occupation from 1894 to 1945 and the Korean War from 1950 to 1953—south Koreans began to emphasize education in order to rebuild their country. This spurred the industrial and economic development that began in the early 1970s, in which the “can-do” attitude of the general public was matched and aided by small science and technology (S&T) groups. After nearly two decades of reconstruction, the illiteracy rate in south Korea is less than 0.1%, per capita income is \$10,000 per year, and exports total \$100 billion per year. Korea is a modern, cosmopolitan, dynamic country and is very interested in developing and expanding in the S&T area. We are the fifth largest automobile maker in the world, our electronic industries claim over 20% of the world's semiconductor market, and we are one of the world's largest shipbuilders. We would like to increase our manufacturing activities, double per capita productivity, and encourage creativity in all sectors of our country. We believe that the efforts of our S&T community will be invaluable in reaching these goals.

Each successive government since the 1970s has recognized the importance of higher education, especially in S&T, and has established research institutes (such as the Korea Institute of Science and Technology and the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute) to support the increase in industrial activity. The creation of new universities also has been encouraged. Under the Ministry of Education, we now have more than 160 universities, plus 140 junior technical colleges, and there are over 30 government-supported research institutes that are largely funded by the Ministry of S&T. The universities and institutes are the main driving force behind the present industrial and economic expansion. We anticipate that the quality of education will improve, especially at the university level, by the beginning of the 21st century, and that the transfer of research results and sophisticated technology developed at universities and research institutes will improve the production process.

Unfortunately, our small peninsula has been divided by ideological conflicts. The general public is eager to peacefully unify our country, and we, as members of the S&T community, are willing to cooperate with our north Korean counterparts in all areas of S&T except the military. We firmly believe that establishing scientific ties with north Korea will result in mutual economic benefit and promote regional stability in East Asia. Scientists and manufacturers in every south Korean province are eager to initiate a cordial professional relationship with north Korea in the hope of securing mutual benefits.

To achieve our economic development goals, we need to increase our creativity and productivity while seeking to globalize our S&T societies. Korean scientists, for example, are eager to publish their research results in international journals. Scientific management of this globalization process, with the budgetary support of government and industries, is essential. South Korea welcomes technological investment by foreign countries, and many Korean industries have opened joint ventures overseas. Korea has always pursued a close relationship between government and industry, and the government has established a program to provide financial incentives for such joint technological ventures.

The Korean Federation of Science and Technology Societies (KOFST) plays an important role in developing S&T policies and fostering the growth of S&T societies. KOFST is a nongovernmental umbrella organization of over 250 professional societies that helps facilitate the transfer of research outcomes and technology from the research institutions to the various industries. KOFST also seeks to increase cooperation among the countries of the Pacific Rim. For example, joint research and industrial ventures with China have been successfully pursued in areas such as aircraft manufacturing, telecommunications equipment, and agricultural products. In addition, we cooperate fully with our allies, which include Canada and the United States, and share our prosperity with them. We strongly believe that increased cooperation among the Pacific Rim countries would be mutually beneficial for social development and should include the strengthening of S&T ties.

Nack-Chung Sung and Yong Seung Chung

Nack-Chung Sung is a former president of KOFST and Yong Seung Chung is a director of KOFST in Seoul, Korea.