



President Kim Dae-jung  
illuminated Korea and the world  
with hope

Kim Dae-jung, the 15th President of Republic of Korea was a dedicated statesman armed with a clear set of belief and thoughts to champion democracy, human rights, and peace for Korea and beyond.



A “conscience in action,” who believed in the power of history and the people.

President Kim Dae-jung was a “conscience in action,” dedicated to democracy, human rights, and peace, who underwent for more than 40 year five near-death experiences including terrorism, kidnapping, murder attempts, a death sentence, six years in prison, exile, house arrest and surveillance, and even his family and friends were imprisoned and tortured. But he never gave in or compromised with unjust forces. When the Chun Doo-hwan military regime framed the Gwangju uprising in May 1980 into an insurrectionary conspiracy, sentenced him to death for masterminding the uprising, and offered to spare his life if he could cooperate with the regime, Kim Dae-jung said as following:



5.18 Gwangju Democratic Uprising in 1980

“ I’m scared of dying too. But if I compromise my values to stay alive, or become a President without being chosen democratically, that’s betraying our people and history. If I do that, I’m ‘dead’ to our history and people forever. But if I stick to my beliefs and die for them, I’ll live on in our history and in the hearts of our people. I believe in history and people.

”



1980  
Sentenced to death at the military trial  
  
1981  
Prisoner number 9. Winter at the Cheongju Penitentiary

The first democratic and horizontal power transition in 50 years since the establishment of the South Korean government



President Kim Dae-jung made history with the first **democratic, non-violent power transfer** in Korea, 50 years after the establishment of the government in 1948. In his inaugural speech, he proclaimed a vision for a new era of politics with participatory democracy, where the people are truly served and recognized as the true masters of the nation."

1998  
Inauguration ceremony of the 15th President of Korea

“ A state exists to serve its people, ensuring they make decisions in a democratic way, have their human rights protected, and exercise their right to happiness. The goal of a state is to help every citizen live an equal and happy life. A government shouldn't rule over their people," he said. "In simple terms, democracy is for a form of government by the people. It's about politics of participation. The participatory politics is a politics, where people have control over their fate, build and protect their country, and grow and develop as part of it. Therefore, democracy works towards improving people's freedom, equality, and wellbeing, while also promoting peaceful cooperation with other countries.

”



# Three National Agenda

Democracy, Democratic Market Economy, and Productive Welfare

# Five National Targets

- First**

we should build a democratic and human rights state, and strengthen democracy through legislation for eform and political participation and expansion.
- Second**

we need to realize a knowledge and information powerhouse to enhance national competitiveness in the information society based on the four major reforms of businesses, finance, public sector, and industrial relations.
- Third**

we need to implement productive welfare that promotes the improvement of people's life through refining the national basic living system, and four major social insurances including health care, national pension, employment, and industrial accidents, as well as innovations in housing and education issues.
- Fourth**

we must make efforts in reforming political system such as the introduction of electoral system reform and party roster systems to address the toxic regional rivalry and the political confrontation and achieve national consensus and integration.
- Fifth**

we need to establish a peace and cooperation system between the two Koreas that achieves the formation of a national economic community through continuous reconciliation, cooperative and inclusive policies, and economic cooperation.

# Building a Democratic and Human Rights State



Prison Writings – A collection of Kim Dae-jung’s writings to his families during imprisonment

In accordance with these national agenda, President Kim Dae-jung laid the legal and institutional groundwork for a state rooted in democracy and human rights. A series of legislation including "Act on the Restoration of Honor and Compensation for the Democratic Movement", "Special Act on the Investigation of Suspicious Deaths", "Jeju April 3rd Special Act", and "Law Regarding the Respect of the Gwangju Democratization Movement" (which included the elevation of the Gwangju May 18 Cemetery to the level of a national cemetery) passed. Moreover, laws designed to advocate human rights across various societal sectors had passed. They included the Youth Basic Act to safeguard the rights of young people, the Korean Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to protect the rights of the disabled, and the Gender Equality Act, which aimed to materialize the legal and societal equal rights of women.

In addition, Kim established the Central Personnel Management Committee to enforce democratic and human rights-oriented HR policies based on meritocracy, eliminating discrimination based on gender, region, and academic background. For the sake of press freedom, he also initiated the establishment of an independent broadcasting commission, enacted the human rights law, and founded an independent National Human Rights Commission, free from government interference.



Democratic Market Economic Reform

President Kim Dae-jung reformed from a state led planned economy to a democratic market economy, from a loan economy to an investment economy, from an industrial economy to an information technology economy.

In order to establish a democratic market economy, four reforms were initiated for businesses, finance, public sector, and industrial relations, and other actions were taken to carry out a '5+3' reform for large corporations, or chaebols. '5' denotes the following changes: increasing the transparency of business management, eliminating mutual debt guarantees, improving financial structures, defining core businesses (business specialization), and reinforcing managerial accountability. '3' stood for three measures as following: separating industrial and financial capital, curbing unfair insider transactions, and preventing irregular inheritances.



Great Nation of IT and Latest Science-technology



2001  
Opening event at COEX of “See KAIST 2001” that celebrated the 30th anniversary of the foundation of KAIST



Launched Naro on the Goheung Peninsula in 1998 by President Kim Dae jung

Social Safety Net for Happy Nation

President Kim used to say, “No one should starve, be deprived of education despite the will to learn, or be unable to receive medical care when ill, due to poverty.” From this principle, the “**National Basic Livelihood Security System**” was implemented as a basic right of citizens, the 4 social insurances – health care, pension, employment, and industrial accident compensation – were implemented across the board, and the separation of medical and pharmaceutical practices was in place for public health.



2000  
At the “Gaemi Maeul,” a poor neighborhood in northwest part of Seoul

To reach the goal of becoming an information powerhouse the government built a national digital superspeed communication network in one year and enabled the nation to enjoy a digital life in their daily life by linking the villages, towns and schools to the Internet.

Under the slogan of “Government in your palm”, the government realized the e-government that enabled a government service available anytime, anywhere and brought e-commerce into people’s daily life.

And the government drove an initiative of “industrialization of 6T in science and technology” – Bio Tech, Nano Tech, Culture Tech, Environment Tech, and Space Tech –turning the country into a world-leading science and technology leader from a chaser country.

Thanks to the informatization, industrialization of science and technology, and democratic market economic reform, Korea overcame the financial crisis in two years, building the 10th largest economy in the world.



## Democratic Political Reform

President Kim Dae-jung wanted to take the **democratic political reform** with an aim of making the national assembly be a venue for discussion and cooperation so as to function as a productive and responsible institution. He set up a 'Special Committee on Political Reform' agreed upon by both the ruling and opposition parties, and fostered democratic institutional reforms by enacting laws related to operation of the national assembly. The key aim of the revision was to create a working national assembly, enhance oversight and control over the executive branch, and increase transparency in political affairs. In addition, he undertook reforms on the political system by introducing changes to the electoral system and the introduction of the party roster system to illuminate the damaging regional antagonism and political confrontation and achieve national unity and integration.

## Culture Policy

### “Support but Do Not Interfere”

President Kim Dae-jung promoted a "Cultural Democracy Policy – Support, but Do Not Interfere", which elevated Korea into a dignified cultural nation. As a result, artists, free from regulatory constraints and interference, expressed their creativity, leading to the global wave of "Hallyu" in various fields.



1998  
Filming with artists to promote Korea as a travel destination



2002  
FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan

## “Cosmo Democracy,” a Path of Resolving the Pollution and Climate Crisis



President Kim advocated “**Cosmo Democracy**”, asserting that the rights of life forms of nature should also be respected. He stated that nature should not be seen as an object of conquest or possession, but humans and nature should be recognized as an organic life community sharing our planet. Based on this philosophy, the "New Millennium Environmental Policy" was established, and international cooperation was strengthened to address global environmental pollution and climate change issues.

## “Sunshine Policy” of Reconciliation and Cooperation for Peaceful Unification of Korea and Settlement of Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Undertaking the “**Sunshine Policy**” of reconciliation and cooperation, President Kim Dae-jung visited Pyongyang and held an inter-Korean summit with North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-il, declaring the "June 15th South-North Joint Declaration." The core of the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration was to agree on regularizing reunions of separated families and enhancing cooperation in various economic, social, and cultural exchanges and on the South's confederation and the North's low-stage federation proposal, built upon **peaceful coexistence, peaceful exchanges, and peaceful unification**. This joint declaration was immediately implemented, and peace was established on the Korean peninsula through this process.





# Reconciliation and Peace Diplomacy

President Kim Dae-jung solidified the ROK-US alliance and the ROK-US-Japan partnership, while also pursuing international diplomacy based on the principles of reconciliation and peace.

President Kim Dae-jung opened up the country to the Japanese popular culture through diplomacy of reconciliation and cooperation with Japan, and signed the "Joint Declaration on Future Partnership between Korea and Japan" with Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi.

President Kim Dae-jung said, "Let's not forget the past, but let's not dwell on the past. Let's move forward to the future."

For the first time in the Korea-Japan relational history, Prime Minister Obuchi said, "I humbly accept the historical fact that Japan has caused a great deal of damage and suffering to the Korean people due to its colonial rule in the past, and I express my sincere reflections and heartfelt apologies for this."

“ Let's not forget the past, but let's not dwell on the past. Let's move forward to the future ”

- 1998 – ROK-US Summit with President Bill Clinton
- 1998 – “KoreaJapan Future Partnership”, 1998 Summit declaration
- 2000 – ROK-China Summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin
- 2001 – Luncheon with former President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union at Blue House



# Vision of East Asia Peace Community



President Kim Dae-jung subsequently held a summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and initiated the regular tri-lateral summits among Korea, China, and Japan, thereby creating a peaceful environment in Northeast Asia. He also regularized the ASEAN+3 (Korea, China, Japan) summit and established the "East Asia Vision Group," which included young politicians and experts, to form a regional community for peace, economic cooperation, and security in East Asia.

At the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) held in Seoul in October 2000, he emphasized peaceful cooperation between Asian and European countries. Additionally, he expressed support for independence of East Timor and democratization of Myanmar.

# Winning Nobel Peace Prize

In December 2000, the centennial year of the Nobel Peace Prize, President Kim Dae-jung was awarded the prestigious award. The Norwegian Nobel Committee justified the award, stating, "President Kim Dae-jung is highly regarded for dedicating his life to democracy, human rights, and peace. He has worked to promote peace between the South and the North, initiated reconciliation and cooperation with Japan, and striven for democracy in Asia and beyond. For these reasons, we are happy to award President Kim Dae-jung the Nobel Peace Prize."



2000 – Winning Nobel Peace Prize in 2000



# Symbol of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

President Kim Dae-jung refrained from retaliatory settling of past accounts in the name of law and justice, and forgave and reconciled with all his political adversaries who had once persecuted him and tried to take his life. This spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation was not only applied to domestic politics, but was also consistently embodied in his policies towards North Korea policy, Japan, as well as in international diplomacy.



1998  
Banquet with Former Presidents of  
South Korea

“ Life, in my contemplation,  
unveils its grand beauty, and history,  
unceasing, advances forward. ”

The epitaph on President Kim Dae-jung's tombstone at the National Cemetery in Dongjak-dong, Seoul, captures his life in his own words. President Kim Dae-jung always said, "The page of history, where I would be recorded is not the page of a person who achieved much in this world, but the page of a person who tried to live their life rightfully."  
"I never considered my life, though filled with hardship, to be an unhappy one. I believe my life has been truly valuable and fulfilling. This isn't because of what I've achieved significantly, but because I believe I've tried to live faithfully for not only our citizens but also all the suffering people of the world, all those who love peace, and all those who cherish freedom and justice. I have tried to live my life devotedly for and with them."

By Kim Dae-jung

