

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good evening.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, I would like to thank all those who have helped us along the way.

Asan is the pen-name of my father, the late Chung Ju-Yung. It is also the name of his home village, Asan-ri, on the foothills of Mount Geumgang, now in North Korea.

My father grew up in a poor farming family. He received three years of Classical Confucian training at a traditional Confucian school, Seodang. His teacher was his grandfather. Then he attended local elementary school run by the Japanese colonial government for three years. That was all the formal education that he received.

As he toiled on the farm, his dream was to move to the city. His dream was fanned by what he read in Dong-A Ilbo, the only newspaper available to him. The paper was delivered every day to the village elder. He was able to read the paper only after all the village elders had gone through it. He poured over each and every word because it was the only source of information about the outside world. He said that he was naïve enough to think that the stories in the serialized novels in the paper were true.

At the age of 16, he made his way to Seoul on foot. Before starting an auto-repair shop he worked as a stevedore in the docks of Incheon, as a construction worker, and as a rice delivery boy. The rest, as they say, is history.

My father yearned for home. His favorite place in South Korea was Gangneung, the venue for the 2018 Winter Olympics. That was the closest he could get to his home village he could no longer return to because of national division.

That is why he wanted to help the people of North Korea. When the

opportunity came for him to do so, he did. He started the Mount Geumgang tourist project as well as the Gaesung Industrial Complex. In 1998 he took 1,001 heads of cow loaded on 100 Hyundai trucks across the DMZ which dramatized the beginning of inter-Korean exchanges. It has been said that the North Koreans far more appreciated the trucks than the cows.

However, he had no illusions about the reality of the division. When he visited his relatives in North Korea, he was able to stay the night. In the middle of the night, his aunt pulled him under the cover of a thick blanket and whispered, "Please don't try to help." He understood what she meant.

Today, we stand at another critical juncture. I am happy that the Asan Institute has become a gathering place for important ideas and leading experts on Korea and the region.

I would like to thank the Asan Institute's board members and President Hahm Chaibong for their work in building the Institute and for organizing this conference. Let us all give them a big round of applause.

Thank you.

Both Chaibong and I are Johns Hopkins alumni. Chaibong was born in Boston when his father was attending Harvard Law School. His family moved back to Korea when he was one-year old, taking a train from Boston to San Francisco and then by a U.S. military cargo ship across the Pacific. That was the most economic way to get home at that time.

The world has changed much since then. Korea has also gone through a great transformation. However, one thing never seems to change: Korea is a small player in a tough neighborhood. Our security environment is undergoing rapid change, once again. South Korea is like a small boat tossed by the sea.

If we look at the sheer magnitude of the geopolitics of the vast Eurasian continent, the fact that a small country like South Korea, located at the eastern tip of the continent, survives as a free democracy is a miracle, a miracle in progress. In order to sustain this miracle, I ask for your wisdom in these turbulent times.

Thank you very much.