

Liberation Day: A Tribute to the Struggle, Resilience, and Unity of the Korean People

August 15 holds profound significance for Korea, commemorating “Liberation Day,” known as Gwangbokjeol, a reminder of the courageous struggle of the Korean people for independence during Japanese occupation. This day not only celebrates the victory in the battle for freedom but also the resilience and determination of a nation that rose against oppression.

The Japanese occupation of Korea began in 1910 and lasted until the end of World War II in 1945. During this period, the Japanese imposed their rule over the Korean peninsula, exploiting both its human and natural resources. Koreans endured land confiscation, labor exploitation, and the suppression of their culture and language in an attempt to erase national identity.

The resilience of the Korean people during the Japanese occupation was an extraordinary testament to their spirit and deep love for freedom. Facing oppression with courage, Koreans found ingenious ways to resist forced cultural assimilation and economic exploitation.

Through acts of artistic and literary resistance and participation in bold independence movements, the nation demonstrated an unwavering determination to keep its identity alive and fight for its right to self-determination.

Various independence movements and organizations emerged within and outside the Korean peninsula during the Japanese occupation, laying the groundwork for future actions in pursuit of independence and keeping the hope of Korean freedom alive during the occupation period.

Thus, on August 15, 1945, with Japan’s surrender to the Allied forces at the end of World War II, the withdrawal of Japanese armed forces from Korea was also announced, marking the moment when the Korean nation regained its independence and turning this date into a symbol of hope and restoration.

Today, amid political divisions and historical tensions, August 15 emerges as a reminder of Korean unity. Although narratives and approaches may differ on both sides of the border, the celebration of Gwangbokjeol is a manifestation of shared identity—a day that reminds us that peace and unity remain possibilities.

Each August 15, Korea not only celebrates the end of oppression but also its ability to be reborn, resist, and redefine itself in the face of adversity. This date not only remembers and commemorates the past but has also become a day of reflection in which Korea reaffirms its spirit of struggle and hope to move forward into the future.

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