

CHENNAI • WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

# To Korea and back

**EVENT** The Festival of Korea gave a peek into the country's art and culture

At any festival where a country's cultural wealth is showcased colourfully on stage, stalls (unless they sell food) will invariably be a flop. After the song and dance sequences are over, the audience will have a brief look-in and move on. But at the Festival of Korea, organised by Rotary International District 3230, the stalls were a big draw. The Rotary International President Elect, D.K. Lee and his wife (who are from Korea) were partly responsible for drawing attention to the stalls.

Both posed for pictures at a stall, standing behind traditional Korean attire called the Hanbok. Anyone could 'get clicked in a Hanbok' for Rs. 50. D.K. Lee tried out a set of four instruments that are integral components of Samul Nori, a form of percussion music unique to Korea. The InKo (India Korea) Centre displayed them with a note that shed light on them.

The Centre (located at R.A. Puram/ 24361224) teaches modern Korean calligraphy, Korean Language Beginners Course and Tae Kwon Do and screens a Korean film every fourth Friday of the month.

As children were allowed a free hand, the four percussion instruments - kwaenagwari (a small gong), Janggu (an hourglass-shaped drum), Jing (a larger gong) and Buk (a frame drum similar to the bass drum) - were resonating



**BRIDGING CULTURES** Children playing the Korean traditional instruments at the festival PHOTO: S.S. KUMAR

with discordant beats and often interfered with the speeches, which centred around the Rotary movement in Korea and Korean investments in India. Not surprising, because the function, held at Hotel Accord Metropolitan, was attended largely by Rotarians and businessmen from both countries.

The Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency had set up a stall. Most of the speakers dwelt upon the almost similar status that India and Korea enjoy in the world of Rotary. "The United States, Japan, India and Korea, in that order, have the first four largest Rotary bases in the world." When it comes

to contribution to the Rotary movement, Korea is ahead of India, but behind the United States and Japan. While the speeches were informative, the preceding music and dance performance by a group of Korean children was enthralling.

Other interesting features included an exhibition of painting by an Indian and a Korean artist (Devendra Kumar Shukla and Mun J.H. Shukla), a sale of Korean crafts and a facility to play Korean games. At the end of the day, it made visitors feel that Korea isn't too far from home.

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