

Why leodo matters

Posted : 2014-09-16 17:10
Updated : 2014-09-16 17:31



leodo, an island situated about 149km southwest of Jeju Island, overlaps the exclusive economic zones of both Korea and China. / Korea Times file

Conference renews attention to boundary issues in East Asia

By Do Je-hae

BANGKOK - International experts gathered in Bangkok for a two-day conference on Sept. 15 and 16 to discuss maritime disputes in East Asia..

The host of the conference was the leodo Research Society, devoted to the resolution of Korea's conflict with China over leodo which lies beneath 4.6 meters of water.

The Bangkok seminar was fourth in the research institute's series on collecting insights about peaceful solutions to boundary confrontations in the region.

"The seas of East Asia face a turning point," said Koh Choong-suk, chairman of the leodo Research Society, during an opening speech at Chulalongkorn University, Monday. "Long-standing tension has persisted in the East China Sea due to the militarized dispute on the Senkaku and Daiyu islands between China and Japan. Neighboring countries in the South China Sea are also competing for maritime sovereignty."

Koh renewed attention to the boundary issues that Korea faces with Japan and China. "It seems that East Asia is going through unprecedented complexity in maritime territorial disputes," Koh said. "Korea is in conflict with Japan over Dokdo. Since Korea and China failed to agree to redraw their sea borders, the sea around leodo is still under a heightened state of alert and tension."

Publication: Korea Times
Date: 16 September 2014
Headline: Why leodo matters

Koh Choong-suk, left, chairman of the leodo Research Society, and Nantawat Boramanand, dean of the faculty of law at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, hold a traditional souvenir from Jeju Island, Monday, ahead of the 2014 Global Governance for Maritime Peace in East Asia conference at Chulalongkorn University. / Courtesy of the leodo Research Society

In the second of the events in 2012 in Taiwan, Koh suggested the "One Ocean Forum," meant to share an understanding of one ocean through diverse networking and to seek a place for discussion and cooperation. The One Ocean Forum, including Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan and Korea, aims to build a joint response system against China and Japan regarding boundary conflicts in the region.

The Jeju Island-based research center invited to Thailand scholars and diplomats from Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam who presented in-depth reports on a wide range of topics.

"Although Thailand does not border any area of the sea near China, hardly a day goes by without there being news reports of serious tensions and increased confrontations between countries in that region," said Nantawat Boramanand, dean of the Faculty of Law at Chulalongkorn. "As a nearby maritime nation, however, Thailand cannot but be affected by these events, and it is most desirous that these disputes be settled in a peaceful manner.

He said that the seminar is "an important step toward further understanding the maritime situation in East Asia, as well as maritime law and governance in general."

The program hosted a number of distinguished speakers, including Dr. Park Yong-ahn, vice president of the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and emeritus professor of Seoul National University; and Lee Jae-gyoon, former vice minister at the Ministry of Land and Transportation and a former member of the National Assembly; among others.

Park delivered a keynote speech in the first session entitled "Activities and Workloads of the Commission on the Limit of the Continental Shelf."

Saratoon Santivasa, professor at Chulalongkorn, made a presentation about recent trends of maritime dispute settlements in International Tribunal for the Law of Sea.

Professor Lee Se-ryon from Chonbuk National University delivered a speech on the jurisdictional issues of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Lee Su-hoon, professor at Kyungnam University, said that compared to 20 years ago, maritime issues have become more severe because the regional order in East Asia is undergoing a transition. "This is an agonizing period, and it will continue at least until 2030," he said.

The scholar said that such seminars were useful in promoting the understanding of boundary issues among different countries. "Unlike government officials, we have leeway and autonomy to speak up."

Several foreign service officers participated in the conference. Edgar B. Badajos, consul general at the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in the Kingdom of Thailand, spoke about the legal status and roles of maritime features in ocean boundaries of the South China Sea. Chotika Attapimon from the office of the permanent secretary at Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrapped up the final session on Monday.

Publication: Korea Times
Date: 16 September 2014
Headline: Why leodo matters

The conference concluded Tuesday with several countries' views on maritime peace. Patthara Limsira, professor at Ramkhamhaeng University, presented the Thai view and Nguyen Hung Son, deputy director of the Institute for the South China Sea Studies at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, presented the Vietnam perspective. Basil C. Bitas, professor at the Singapore Management University, explained the Singaporean position on maritime peace in the South China Sea. Although Bitas is not Singaporean, he has taught in Singapore for eight years. The Singaporean press, like The Straits Times, places great importance on covering maritime conflicts.

The past series of leodo international conference have taken place on Jeju and in Taiwan.

The Korea Times and The Hankyoreh have been the media partners of the event since its inception in 2010.