

National Foundation Day of the REPUBLIC OF KOREA

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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Foreign policy of the Republic of Korea

In the 1990s, the goal of Korean foreign policy was to secure international support for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, particularly in view of the North Korean nuclear weapons controversy and the death of Kim Il-sung. But, when the Asian financial crisis hit the nation at the end of 1997, the Korean government had to put greater emphasis on economic diplomacy to overcome the liquidity shortage, improve sovereign credit ratings and undertake reforms and restructuring. The foreign policy priority of the Kim Dae-jung administration has been to overcome the financial crisis, to promote exports, to improve international competitiveness through corporate reforms and restructuring and to maintain and strengthen traditional alliances.

Recently, as the Korean economy recovered its vitality, the top foreign policy priority has returned to laying the groundwork for reduction of

tension and peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula and fostering traditional relationships. Korea will also actively pursue economic diplomacy to improve Korea's international competitiveness, so that Korea may join the ranks of the advanced group of nations. Other foreign policy priorities include promotion of democracy, human rights and multilateral cooperation; cultural diplomacy; and strengthening consular activities and promoting the interests of overseas Koreans.

In order to lay the groundwork for peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula, the two leaders of Korea and the United States reaffirmed the Korea-US alliance at the summit held on February 20, 2002 in Seoul, and agreed that all issues concerning the Korean Peninsula should be resolved through dialogue. Accordingly, in consultation with the United States, Korea will follow this up in concrete ways and focus its diplomatic efforts to gain

international support for the principles agreed to by the Korea-US summit.

On the occasion of the UN General Assembly, APEC, ASEM and ASEAN Plus Three summit meetings, President Kim Dae-jung will be able to meet with leaders of other countries and discuss matters of mutual concern. Korea will also foster and deepen cooperative ties with the United States, Japan, China and Russia, as well as the EU and ASEAN countries, and encourage them to contribute to common prosperity, as well as the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Particularly important in this regard will be close coordination of its North Korea policy with the United States and Japan.

The Korean government will also effectively address the changes in the global economic and trade environment. For example, it will actively participate in the WTO

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H E Kim Dae-jung
President of the Republic of Korea

Education in ROK

In the 1880s, modern schools were first introduced in Korea, as the nation began to open itself to Western culture. When the Republic of Korea was established in 1948, the nation instituted a 6-6-4 national educational system. In 1953, six years of elementary school education became mandatory and free for all children. Today, Koreans enjoy a highest literacy rate in the world. Many experts have observed that Korea owes much of its economic success to its highly educated workforce.

School system

Today, the Korean school system follows a 6-3-3-4 pattern, which consists of elementary school (1st to 6th grades), middle school (7th to 9th grades), high school (10th to 12th grades) and university (or 4, 3 or 2-year colleges). Elementary schools provide six years of compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 and 11. Middle schools offer three years of secondary education to those aged 12 to 14, while high schools provide three years of advanced secondary education to those aged 15 to 17.

High schools are divided into two categories, general and vocational. General high schools teach various liberal arts subjects including the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. This category also includes the areas of arts, physical education, science, and foreign languages, while vocational schools concentrate on practical skills and training in such areas as computers, accounting, mechanical engineering, handicraft, agriculture and marine culture.

Institutions of higher learning include junior (vocational) colleges and four-year colleges/universities. At this level, students are free to choose between 2, 3, and 4-year college education, depending on one's aspirations and available resources. College entrance examination is highly competitive and requires careful preparation.

There are also special schools offering elementary and secondary education for the deaf, blind and others with learning difficulties. Preschool education is provided by kindergartens.

Elementary education

Elementary school enrollment showed a sharp increase from 1952, reaching a peak of more than 5 million in 1971. Such a phenomenal increase resulted in crowded classrooms, with more than 90 pupils crammed in one classroom in some schools during those years. In 1960, the average number of students per teacher stood at 58.8. By 2001, the year for which the latest statistics are available, the number has dramatically decreased to 35.6.

As of last year, the nation had 5,322 elementary schools, where over 4 million pupils were enrolled and were staffed by 142,715 teachers.

The basic curricula for the elementary school education are generally divided into nine principal subjects: ethics, Korean language, social studies, arithmetic, natural science, physical education, music, fine arts and the practical arts.

Secondary education

The number of middle school students also showed an impressive rate of growth in recent decades. The percentage of elementary school graduates advancing to middle school increased from 58.4 per cent in 1969 to 99.9 percent in 2001. As of 2001, there were 2,770 middle schools across the nation with a total enrollment of 1.83 million.

The "middle school entrance examination" was abolished in 1969, and students are usually assigned to middle schools located in their district of residence. This measure was adopted to remove school discriminations and to provide a greater number of elementary students easier access to middle school education.

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MESSAGE

It gives me a great pleasure and privilege to convey warm greetings on behalf of the People and the Government of the Republic of Korea to the People and Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh on the occasion of our National Foundation Day.

I am extremely pleased to note that since establishment of the diplomatic ties in 1973, our two countries have been enjoying excellent relations in various fields. We highly appreciate our bonds of friendship and cooperation have continued to grow. I will be very much proud and delighted to commemorate the 30th anniversary of such amicable and cooperative relations between our two countries next year.

Korea and Bangladesh have worked together to meet the bilateral and multinational tasks and challenges - promoting economic cooperation, finding better ways to develop the nation, enhancing democracy and human rights, strengthening regional peace and stability and making a good contribution to the international peace and prosperity. Our two countries share many things in common. We are the people with tenacity and indigenous resilience to overcome difficulties or hardship situation. As we understand the Bengali culture regards freedom as a highest value, Koreans have been well fighting for freedom and democracy until quite recently.

It is noted with great satisfaction that Korea is the largest investor in EPZ, creating more than 100,000 jobs and has made a

considerable contribution to Bangladesh's exports. I hope Korean investment in this country will continue to grow in the future for mutual benefit. I would like to appreciate that nearly 20,000 Bangladesh people have gone to Korea to work for the continuous development of my country. They are in general highly commended for their diligence and law-abiding posture in Korea. I sincerely hope that they will be one of the valuable assets to make our two people better understand each other, while playing a meaningful role in modernizing their motherland.

It is my firm belief that there are a lot more for further development of our bilateral relations. We will continue to be ready for sharing our views and experience with Bangladeshi people especially in the fields of education, health, agriculture, vocational training and information technology. We can better afford to utilize our potential to the progress in the welfare of our two countries.

I would like to take this precious opportunity to introduce the 14th Asian Games 2002 taking place in Busan, the 2nd biggest city in Korea, from September 29 to October 14. As the 2002 World Cup held in Seoul and Tokyo a couple of months ago, I am confident that the Busan Asian Games 2002 will be another moment to promote friendship and exchange among the participants. About 18,000 athletes, officials and journalists from the 43 member states of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) will demonstrate full

of their abilities, competence and talents under the theme of "New Vision, New Asia." It will serve to deepen our friendship and solidarity, thus contributing to regional and international peace and stability.

We are now spending 2nd year of the 21st century. As has been done in the previous century, we will absolutely continue to expand, deepen and consolidate our relations. We will work harder for getting this region more secured, more prosperous and better place to live. There is a solid bridge of mutual understanding and cooperation between Bangladesh and Korea. Let's continue to walk hand in hand for betterment of our lives.

I wish all of you every success and happiness.
Dhonnobad.



Kyu-hyung Lee
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh

Health and welfare in ROK

SINCE the inception of the first five-year Economic Development Plan in 1962, the Korean people have experienced rapid socio-economic changes. During the following three decades, the Korean economy saw remarkable progress, so much so that by December 1996 Korea was able to join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. One year later, however, the Korean economy was struck by an acute foreign exchange crisis, which led to an intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The crisis brought on massive unemployment and increased demand for welfare services, not to mention family disintegration and disparities in income levels among social strata. After several years of hard work, Korea was able to pay off in full the IMF loans in August 2001, three years ahead of schedule.

The government has put a high priority on the promotion of "productive welfare," which was aimed at helping the needy while increasing their productivity. It has also been developing the nation's human resources by introducing various support programs for society's most vulnerable groups, including destitute workers and low-income households. As a result of specific policies carried out under

the goals and principles of productive welfare, these groups were able to attain significant improvements in their standards of living.

Even while the nation was struggling to cope with the 1997-98 financial crisis, the government firmly held to its welfare goals and introduced diverse policies to expand the social safety net. One of them is the Basic Livelihood Guarantee System, introduced in October 2000. Under the system, government subsidies were provided to more than 1.5 million people in 2001, a far cry from 370,000 recipients in December 1997. Those covered under the support program are entitled to receive the difference between their real incomes and the minimum cost of living, regardless of their age or ability to work.

The national pension scheme, first introduced in 1988, covered all workplaces with 10 or more employees. In April 1999, it was expanded to cover the entire working population. At the end of 2001, a total of 16.1 million workers have subscribed to the national pension program, individually or collectively, through their employers. At present, some 760,000 subscribers are receiving pensions. The government has also introduced a pension plan for elderly people in rural areas. Citizens who are 60 years or older

are entitled to pensions if they paid into the system for a minimum of five years.

Another major safety net is the unemployment insurance program that has been greatly expanded and restructured to help the legions of workers who were laid off due to the economic crisis or corporate restructuring. Unemployment insurance was launched in 1995 to cover only full-time workers at companies with 30 employees or more. It was expanded in October 1998 to include workers at all workplaces. In order to better support the unemployed, the benefit period has been extended and the amount of assistance increased.

Before July 2000, the Industrial accident Insurance Program was applied to companies with five or more workers. To aid the victims of industrial accidents and their families, coverage for industrial accident compensation insurance was expanded in July of 2000 to include self-employed workers. Recognising that those employed in the workforce were not the only ones in need of assistance, services for the elderly, the disabled and children have also been improved and expanded under new government programs and policies.

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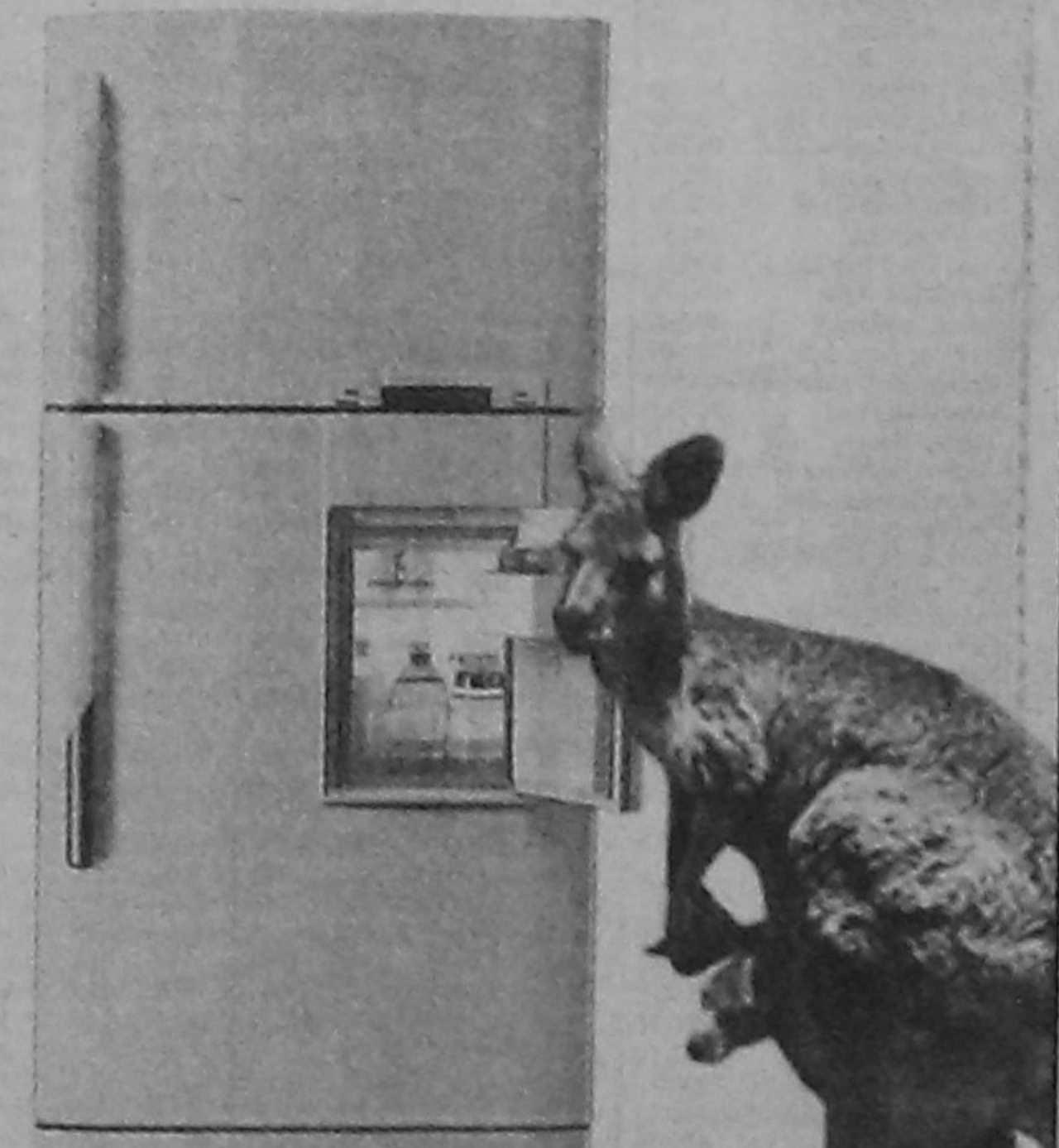
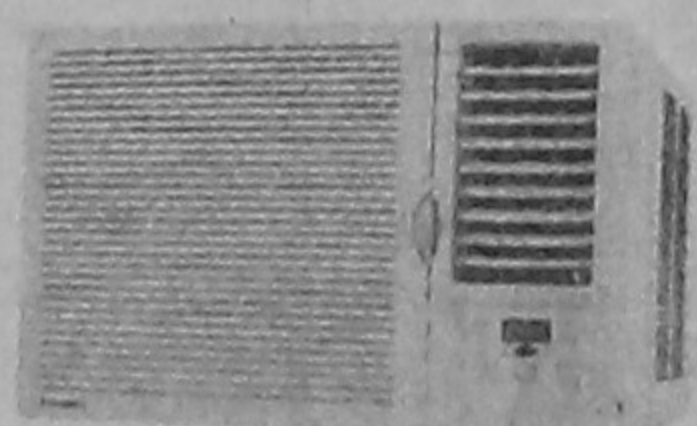
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