

## **Korean Government Working to Encourage Adoptions**

As part of its efforts to encourage adoptions in Korea, the government is marking the second anniversary of Adoption Day on Friday. Those efforts haven't produced tangible results yet since Koreans generally consider family lineage very important.

From 1958 to 2006, 227,983 Korean children were adopted, the Ministry of Health and Welfare said on Thursday. Of those, 70 percent or 150,944 were adopted by foreign families and 30 percent or 68,939 were adopted by Korean families.

The number of adoptions by foreigners hit a low of 1,899 last year, the first time the figure fell below 2,000. But the number still accounts for more than half of all adoptions last year. In January, the government introduced new a system to prompt more domestic adoptions. Under the new rules, children can only be adopted by overseas families once they have waited at least five months for a Korean family.

The government pays subsidies of W100,000 (US\$1=W925) to local families who adopt children under 13. To further ease the financial burden, the subsidies will be given to families who adopt children under 18.

However, prejudice against adoption is strong in Korea. Girls account for 64 percent of all domestic adoptions because some families worry that adopted boys might try to claim the family inheritance.

Korean families also turn their backs on physically challenged children. Last year, 98 percent or 713 of handicapped children were adopted by overseas families, while only 2 percent or 12 children were adopted by Koreans.