
Letter from the Editor

Judging from the results of the recent parliamentary elections, it seems that the Korean people want change. After the April elections, there will be a total of 137 new National Assembly members out of the total 299, many of whom are younger-generation politicians. Many incumbent political heavyweights were beaten on their home turf by these newcomers. It looks like a generational change is taking place.

I think that these developments indicate that South Korea is right now in a particularly critical period, one marked by great change and uncertainty. The economy is showing similar signs. Bolstered by strong economic growth in recent years, Korea is on the verge of joining the club of the advanced nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Yet at the same time, it is being pressured to make major structural changes, particularly in the financial markets. At this point, it seems likely that the Korean economy will be able to make the soft-landing that everyone has been hoping for. However, there are several aspects of the economy which warrant close attention. One is consumer prices, which have risen 2.2 percent over the end of last year, a bit higher than the Government hoped for. Another is the nagging trade deficit, which is being aggravated by the appreciation of the won. And the bipolarization between the light industries and the heavy and chemical sectors as witnessed in the industrial output and export structures remains a cause of concern.

One distinct characteristic of modern society is that the amazing advances in information and telecommunications technology and the rapid changes they are causing are making time ever more critical. We cannot afford to sit by idly and watch the world pass by; we must view things from a wider perspective and act decisively.

Fundamental changes are needed in our politics, our economy, our education—in all areas of our society—if we are to survive and prosper in this increasingly competitive world. We must refine our competitiveness in every aspect, since the competition is growing tougher day by day. At the same time, we must reach out and cooperate with others, even our possible competitors, as long as it is in our best interests. As the saying goes, there is safety in numbers, and working with others will often increase the chances of our success.

In addition, because things are changing so rapidly, we must look further into the future. We must prepare that much earlier and invest that much more time and effort. We can no longer afford to take a “live now, pay later” attitude; we need to deal with major issues now such as the environment before they go beyond our control.

I think it is the dream of everyone to pass on to their descendants a better world than the one we live in. This is clearly possible for us if we join together to work for the greater good. Toward this end, I think that we need to adopt a set of values, a people-oriented “new humanism,” which respects the individuality and creativity of all humans. Only in this way will it be possible for us to maximize our abilities and fully reach our true potential.

It has been almost a year since the Hyundai Research Institute began publishing the English-language VIP Economic Report. In that time, the VIP has undergone many changes in terms of style, content and format in an effort to better serve our readership. We have received much positive feedback on our publication, but we always trying to find room for improvement. Therefore, we welcome any comments or suggestions on changes that should be made. 