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Young Indifferent to Corruption

By Kim Rahn
Staff Reporter

Korean adolescents are the least transparent and ethical among four Asian countries, with more than one fifth preferring being rich to being honest, necessitating better education on morality and law observance.

Transparency International Korea said Friday that Korean teenagers got the lowest mark in the Youth Integrity Index, which it conducted in September, on middle and high school students of four countries _ Korea, Bangladesh, India and Mongolia.

Out of a score of 10, Bangladeshi youths scored 8.45, followed by Indian at 7.55, Mongolian 6.64 and Korean 6.11.

As for wealth being more important than honesty, 3.1 percent of Bangladeshi students, 8.4 percent of Indian, and 9.1 percent of Mongolian said it was, while 22.6 percent of Koreans agreed. Less than half of Korean youths, or 45.8 percent, said honesty was more important than wealth.

Korean students also had little respect for law. In Bangladesh, 7.2 percent said they might not follow traffic rules if there were no police present, compared to 44.1 percent of Koreans. The percentage was 8.8 in India and 12 in Mongolia.

Korean youths showed low integrity elsewhere as well, saying it is acceptable for their family to get rich by abusing power or breaking the law; it is not necessary for students to specify sources of citation in case they copy articles from the Internet for their homework; and they would cut into a long queue at the cinema.

The report showed that the ranking of the youth index was the reverse of that of the corruption perceptions index (CPI), which indicates the degree of public sector corruption as perceived by business people and country analysts. In the 2008 CPI, Korea ranked 40th, India, 85th, Mongolia, 102nd, and Bangladesh, 147th.

"The index shows how Korea's education on ethics and law observance is poor. If we don't attend to this situation, Korea will not become a transparent, advanced nation," Kim Geo-sung, chairperson of the organization, said.

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Bestseller Writer's Plagiarism Calls Online Ethics Into Question



Poster of TV drama, "Seoul Scandal" based on Lee Sun-mi's novel. "Sad Story of the Capital."

By Bae Ji-sook
Staff Reporter

Online content using publications and creative materials without respecting copyright has again become a hot issue after a bestselling author admitted to having plagiarized another writer's piece in her online material.

Lee Sun-mi, author of "Sad Story of the Capital," and "Coffee Prince" made a public apology for stealing literary giant Jo Jung-rae's pieces for her book. Lee and her publisher recalled all the books in stores, while the Korean Romance Writers' Association deleted her pieces from their Web site.

Her plagiarism became an issue when some literature fans raised suspicions that parts of her Sad Story of the Capital resemble that of Jo's epic novel "Taebaek Sanmaek." In her novel talking about life in Seoul in 1930, there are several phrases that are identical to that of Jo's novel talking about life in 1948-1953. Indeed, among several paragraphs, only five to six words were different.

Lee explained that her piece was originally meant for fun, not commercial use. She used pieces of stories on an online community in 1999 where amateur writers exchanged their romance stories and commented on each other.

"I was overwhelmed by the popularity and was in a hurry and mixed information and references with my pieces. Also, I regret not having been fully aware of copyright when I wrote it," she admitted.

Critics and observers said this case was a perfect example of online material not compliant with copyright. While many online writers cross the lines between "inspired by" and "copied from" original pieces they adore, not many people are aware of copyright infringement.

Culture critic Lee Mun-won said to news outlet Newsis that stricter measures for plagiarism should be adopted. "Many people think online content is free, therefore, they can use it for free, too. However, it is still not totally okay for amateurs to steal someone's creation just because they are non-commercial. In days where amateurs turn pros overnight, we need to look into it," he said.

Lee Sun-mi is one of the most popular romance writers in the country at the moment. She started as a stock analyst before becoming a full-time writer in 2001. She became a TV drama writer when two of her novels were made into TV shows that were smash hits in 2007. She is currently working on a new piece with the director of Coffee Prince.

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