

第4部 課題

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第17回 毎日パソコン入力コンクール 冬季大会

【課題】

第4部 英文B

Limiting the adverse effects of lowering
the legal age of adulthood

制限時間 5分

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※この課題は、平成29年8月22日付 毎日新聞社説の英訳より引用しました。

(文字数3,000字程度)


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Editorial: Limiting the adverse effects of lowering the legal age of adulthood 

Is it appropriate to lower the age of adulthood in Japan from 20 to 18? That question is set to emerge as a major theme in Diet debate. 


The government intends to submit a bill to revise the Civil Code to the Diet during an extraordinary session this autumn to lower the age. The current age of 20 for adulthood stems from a decree issued in 1876 by the Grand Council of State. This was carried over into the Civil Code established in 1896. If the government's bill is passed, it will be the first change in the age of adulthood since the decree took effect. 


The age of majority in many countries is 18. In Japan, the voting age has already been lowered from 20 to 18, and the move is significant in encouraging young people to adopt awareness as adults at an early stage. 


However, when the Ministry of Justice sought public input last year on lowering the age of adulthood, many expressed concerns about doing so. 


Lowering the age of adulthood to 18 would leave Japan with legal adults still in their third year of high school. Some educators expressed fears that if the age at which those students could drink, smoke and engage in public gambling such as horse racing were also lowered, it could hinder their healthy upbringing, and make instruction more difficult. 

The government is poised to retain a ban on public gambling for

those under 20. In light of gambling addiction and the adverse effects on people's health, this is probably an appropriate move. 

Young people also need to be aware of the risks connected with being deemed an adult -- the main one being that associated with contracts. 

If the age of majority is lowered from 20 to 18, then 18-year-olds will be able to take out loans and sign credit card contracts without their parents' signatures. Under the Civil Code now, the parents of minors have the right to cancel contracts that they don't agree to. Under the Labor Standards Act, those with parental authority can also cancel work contracts that are disadvantageous to minors. But once such protections are removed for 18- and 19-year-olds, how can they be sheltered from malicious business operators and shady firms? Students will need to be educated more in junior high and high school on how to handle the risks to limit the adverse effects of the lowered age. 

With the number of needy households on the rise, there are probably many young people who lack opportunities to receive social support such as welfare and education. When the age of adulthood is lowered, we cannot allow a situation in which independence alone is emphasized while the necessary protective measures fall by the wayside. 

A related issue is whether the applicable age of the Juvenile Act will also be lowered. How to analyze the current state of affairs in which corrective education has shown some effects is a focal point. Thorough debate is needed on what should not be covered by a blanket lowering of age.
