

South Korea to change its system for calculating age

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In news— South Korea has approved changes in its system for calculating age.

What are the changes?

- **This approval will help standardise the existing system for measuring people's ages**, which is based on a traditional method that sometimes adds up to two years to an individual's biological age.
- The revision is aimed at reducing unnecessary socio-economic costs because legal and social disputes, as well as confusion, persist due to the different ways of calculating age.

Current methods of calculating age?

There are three methods in use at the moment.

- **The first is the one used by the rest of the world, where the age at birth is zero and subsequent birthdays lead to the addition of a year**, and this is used for certain legal and administrative purposes in South Korea as well.
- **The second is the 'Korean age'**, the method most popularly used in society, where a **baby is born and aged one, and turns a year older on January 1, regardless of the date of birth**. Thus, a child born on December 31, 2021, will have turned two years old by January 2, 2022.
- **The third method is the 'year age'**, where a **baby is born zero years old, and turns a year older every January 1**. This method is again used for some legal and official purposes, most notably for compulsory military conscription, to determine when a child can start

school, and to determine when a juvenile needs legal protection from abuse.

Reasons for Koreans calculating age differently-

- Historians have trouble pinpointing a **government decree for the current system seen as a remnant of an ancient culture.**
- Some say the **traditional ways of determining age take into account the time spent in the womb.**
- Others say the unique method came about as **ancient counting systems in this part of Asia did not have the concept of zero.**
- While **similar methods of calculating age existed in China, Japan, Vietnam, etc., gradually, all the countries moved to the international system.**
- **North Korea adopted the international system in 1985, but with a difference – it follows its own calendar, based on the birth of the national founder and president-for-life Kim Il Sung.**