

**October 02, 2006****The Korea Herald****[번역] Park declares presidential bid 박근혜, 대통령 출마 선언**

[코리아헤럴드 2006-10-02 10 02]

Park Geun-hye, former chairwoman of the opposition Grand National Party, officially opened her bid for the presidency by announcing Saturday that she would run the party primary for presidential nominees.

"I have decided to run in the primary race to help create a stable life style and a more developed country for the people of Korea," said Park during a press conference in Frankfurt, Germany. Park embarked on an European tour last week at the invitation of Germany's Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

This is the first time the 54-year-old politician spoke with conviction on the likelihood of her competing in the presidential race despite being long tipped as a potential frontrunner, even before she quit as party chairwoman in June this year.

The presidential ballot is scheduled for December next year.

Park said the party and herself are open to "all possibilities" regarding the formation of alliances with the fellow opposition Democratic Party or former president Kim Dae-jung, the party's de facto creator. By closing ranks with the DP, which boasts widespread support in its stronghold of Jeolla Province, the GNP believes the party may have a bigger chance at victory.

Based in Gyeongsang Province, the GNP is otherwise unlikely garner many from Jeolla.

"As long as we stand coordinated on policy matters and committed to public trust, (an alliance) is a feasible plan," said Park.

With the comments, the presidential hopeful invited other parties, including the ruling Uri Party to join the GNP.

The former chairwoman remained opposed to switching to an "open primary race," under which the party primaries would be open to a public vote. "It is my strong belief that consistency is one of the top prerequisites to be acknowledged as an advanced nation. Changing the rules for personal reasons do not constitute consistency," she said.

The ruling Uri has recently decided to adopt open primaries.

**October 02, 2006****The Korea Herald**

Park's overall political vision centers on the concept of "a small government." The main line of attack against the pro-reform Roh Moo-hyun government is its focus on micro-management. By over-regulating, critics and political opponents believe the administration has weakened the country's competitive edge.

"Future economic policies should shift toward deregulation and policies for improving the autonomy of the private sector," said Park.

She also called for increased government support for local firms, which Park saw as "being discriminated against when compared to treatment toward foreign firms." Park's top competitor in the primary race is likely to be Lee Myung-bak, the former Seoul Mayor. Lee, 65, finished a successful mayoral term this year after completing the Cheonggye Stream to give Seoul a much-needed facelift. In addition to being a favorite scenic spot, the new buildings erected around the stream are helping generate more business for the city. Lee has outlined a new project to build a cross-country canal as one of his election pledges.

Park, on the other hand, has failed to record any tangible accomplishments despite decades spent in the political arena.

But to her credit, observers point out that the GNP leader spearheaded her party's landslide victories in the gubernatorial races this year.

Park's personal popularity subsequently rose, and she recently topped CBS radio polls with ratings above 25 percent. But Lee was hard on her heels with around 24 percent.

Aside from Lee, a string of formidable candidates are lining up to take part in the presidential election.

Former Prime Minister Goh Kun recently launched a political group to lay the groundwork for his campaign, while Sohn Hak-gyu, former Gyeonggi Province governor, has gladly traded in his sleek image for a nation-wide pilgrimage to win middle class hearts.

(jemmie@heraldm.com) By Kim Ji-hyun