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## Korea launches a switch to open source

Last modified: October 1, 2003, 8:05 AM PDT

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Special to CNET News.com

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**The South Korean government has announced that by 2007 it plans to replace proprietary software with open-source alternatives on a substantial number of its PCs and servers.**

Thousands of computers in ministries, government-linked organizations and universities in South Korea will replace Microsoft's Windows operating system and Office productivity suite with open-source alternatives under the plan, according to the country's Ministry of Information and Communication.

Twenty percent of desktop software and 30 percent of server software will be **changed to open source** by 2007, said a representative from the Ministry of Information and Communication.

As a first step, organizations including South Korea's Industry Promotion Agency and the Korea Association of Information and Telecommunication will switch to open-source software such as the Linux operating system and Mozilla Web browser for both desktop PCs and servers.

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"If the change is successful, we will be able to save about \$300 million a year. Also, we may insure security and interconnectivity of national information systems," the ministry representative said.

However, industry experts have expressed skepticism, saying that the country's software developers don't have the

resources to support both Windows and Linux.

Also, Microsoft Korea claimed that commercial software was never highly expensive. Microsoft Korea Marketing Director Kwon Chan said that although open-source software may seem to be cheaper initially, it will eventually cost more, once maintenance and management costs are considered.

The South Korea government said it is on the side of competition.

"We will allow anyone who uses open-source software access to Web-based services. Once that environment is made ready, then true competition will evolve," a spokesperson for the government said.

Currently, Linux users are not able to access several key Korean Web-based services. For example, many portals run by banks and government agencies support only Microsoft's Windows operating system and Internet Explore browser.

The Ministry of Information and Communication plans to get help from other government ministries to ensure active participation from open-source groups.

Last month, Japan, China and South Korea met in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh to sign an agreement to jointly research and **develop a non-Windows, open-source operating system.**

*Seung eun Myung of ZDNet Korea reported from Seoul.*

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