

## When born, child to join mom as unregistered

Kyodo News

A 27-year-old woman in Hyogo Prefecture whose birth went unregistered because of a controversial Civil Code provision is due to give birth in June, making it likely that her child will also go unregistered, a group supporting her said Tuesday.

The impasse stems from the legal provision that recognizes a baby born within 300 days of divorce as a child born to the mother and her former spouse, even if another man is the biological father.

The Justice Ministry said it has never heard of a case of an unregistered woman giving birth.

The woman is unregistered because her mother married 73 days after divorcing her former husband and her birth father is a man her mother married later, according to the support group.

The group met with Justice Minister Kunio Hatoyama on Tuesday and urged him to deal with various injustices caused by the widely disputed rule.

"The matter presents various problems so I will study it in a dispassionate manner," Hatoyama replied.

Last year the woman held a wedding ceremony with a former classmate, but they are not recognized as a lawfully married couple.

She learned she was pregnant last autumn and was told by her local municipality that it would not be able to register her child's birth on the grounds she has no domicile of origin due to her lack of birth registration.

In May 2007, the ministry issued a notice to

municipal governments changing the rule. Consequently, a child can now be recognized as the offspring of his or her mother and her current husband or as an illegitimate baby if a doctor's certificate proving the mother became pregnant after she got divorced is produced.

The rule change has so far helped to grant legal status to only a fraction of the children in similar plights.

## **17 so far at baby hatch**

KUMAMOTO (Kyodo) Seventeen infants were left anonymously at Japan's first baby hatch in Jikei Hospital in Kumamoto between its launch May 10 last year and March 31, a city official said Tuesday.

The number, disclosed officially for the first time, is one more than the 16 reported by media organizations. The total is made up of 13 boys and four girls, according to the official.

The information was disclosed at a meeting of municipal health and welfare officials.

One infant has been returned to the custody of a couple believed to be the parents, sources said.

Six of the babies were left in the hatch with notes. None showed signs of abuse or other indications that criminal acts had been committed, according to the official.

The baby hatch has attracted supporters and critics among the public since it was opened, with some saying it will help save lives while others say it will encourage parents to abandon their children.

The hospital and the municipal government, which authorized the establishment of the facility, had previously disclosed almost no official information about the hatch out of concern for privacy.

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