

DPRK BUILDS HUNDREDS OF CELL TOWERS, EXPANDS DISTANCE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Chosun Sinbo reported on November 15 that North Korea has erected hundreds of cellular signal towers throughout the country, providing phone service to every province, city, and town in North Korea. According to the report, the expansion of the North's 3G network has really taken off in 2010, and the number of subscribers within the country has grown 2.5 times in the latter half of the year, as has the available coverage area.

This initiative has focused on setting up hundreds of cell towers near major highways, cities, and industries important to economic advancement. It was also reported that industry insiders had revealed that not only towns, cities, and provinces were targeted for the expansion of cellular service, but that there was a plan to erect towers in the back country, as well, and that authorities aimed to extend service to every village in the country by next year.

To this end, the Chosun Sinbo reported, the Pyongyang-based DPRK-PRC JV Checom Joint Venture Company has set up a "flow manufacturing process and is producing hundreds of high-performance cellular phones each day" and, "Related sectors are testing new devices and actively working on a project aimed at modifying the operating software to suit the needs of North Koreans."

The paper also reported that North Korea's academics and scientists collaborated to develop such a system in a short time, and that the system was also integrated into the nation's Intranet. This system is different from the previous configuration in that videos, recordings, and text messages can be sent both ways, so that the system better supports an exchange of information rather than merely a transfer. The paper emphasized that by providing distance education service to every local academic office, city and town library, and science and educational facility, the North has enacted a state-of-the-art, nationwide education system. In addition, by providing the infrastructure for real-time interactive lectures, workers and children in every region of the country can easily pursue their education by actively participating in a wide range of lectures.