

NORTH KOREA AIMING TO BECOME A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COUNTRY BY 2012

North Korea has paved the way to achieve its goal of becoming a strong and prosperous country by 2012, the one-hundred year anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung. This goal of reaching such a status in only five years was announced at the recent nationwide open assembly of intellectuals, the first such meeting in 15 years. Pyongyang first introduced the ‘Strong and Prosperous Country’ strategy in August 1998, announcing the national strategy of the Kim Jong Il regime through an article printed in the ‘Rodong Shinmun’, the newspaper of the North’s communist party,

Choi Tae-bok, secretary of the political department of the Workers’ Party central committee, stated in the closing speech of the recent intellectual’s assembly that the 100-year anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung was deeply significant, and stressed that “every intellectual must open the doors to [the era of] a strong and prosperous country” by the 100th anniversary of the birth of the nation’s founder.

Taking the position that North Korea has already become a strongly ideological nation by sticking to socialism, that on October 9, 2006, the North became a strong military nation by testing a nuclear weapon, and the focus in this year’s New Year’s Editorial on becoming an economically powerful country through economic development and improvement of the lives of the people, it appears that the North is proceeding with this national strategy on all fronts. This means that if the North can focus on its economic problems and become an economically strong nation over the next five years, it can proclaim to have become a Strong and Prosperous Country.

North Korea's recent position on solving its nuclear issues and improving relations with the United States and South Korea adds some credence to the idea that Pyongyang has decided to solve its economic woes in a move to become this strong and prosperous country.

According to the North Korean point of view, the three issues of security, economy, and succession are related, and that security and succession issues cannot be resolved without first solving economic problems. North Korea showed a bold initiative in beginning to implement the February 13 agreement, and hosting the inter-Korean summit meeting was a reflection of Kim Jong Il's 'strategic resolve'.