

KIM JONG IL SITE VISITS INDICATE DPRK'S FOCUS ON ECONOMY

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has started the new year by visiting a series of facilities and locations important to the economy in order to stimulate 'Economic Revival'. DPRK media outlets reported on January 21 that Kim had examined the 18th national program performance and exhibition which opened last year, and that on the 6th, he visited the Ryesung Power Plant in North Hwanghae Province and dispensed on-location directives.

In North Korea, Kim's new year's traveling is indicative of the country's national goals for the year, and Kim's trip to economic facilities appears to indicate that DPRK authorities are focusing on rebuilding the economy this year.

On January 9, the Chosun Sinbo, a publication of the General Association of Korean Residents of Japan, reported, "In the changing face of the Northeast Asian political atmosphere emerging as the 6-Party agreement is implemented, [we] are preparing an advantageous atmosphere for the revival of the North Korean economy," and called for "more active promotion of economic cooperation and exchange with each country in the world." The article stressed promoting '21st century rehabilitation by one's own effort' by acquiring modern science and technology appropriate for the country.

Last year saw the beginning of improvement in U.S.-DPRK relations and resolution of nuclear issues, and the national strategy for this year seems to be economic expansion based on these developments. In particular, the symbolic significance of Kim Jong Il's personal visits to two

places of economic interest goes to show that North Korea is on a path intended for economic growth. In North Korea, on-location guidance by Kim Jong Il indicates national objectives and serves to focus national capabilities on that location.

According to North Korea's New Year's Joint Editorial, "The role of science and technology in the construction of an economically powerful nation must be decidedly elevated," and went on to stress that, in line with the demands of the information industrial age, a revolution in education is necessary and a competent labor force that can participate in the creation of a strong and prosperous nation must be greatly promoted.

If Kim Jong Il's inspection of the power plant is an indication of support for the construction of infrastructure and other electrical facilities necessary for economic development, the inspection program indicates what industrial sector the North will focus its energies on in the future. Through increased production in the light industrial and agricultural sectors, North Korea is expected to focus on improving the lives of the people first, and in the future, focus on development of the IT sector.