# DPRK'S LARGEST COPPER MINE FLOODED WITH DIFFICULTIES

It is being reported that North Korea's Chungnyun Mine, in Hyesan, Ryanggang Province, is facing severe economic difficulties due to floodwater. Hyesan mines produce 80 percent of all North Korean copper, and the North had estimated that it will be able to continue mining copper there for the next forty years. Chinese firms in Hebei's Luan River region had wanted to import 51 percent of Hyesan Chungnyun Mine's product, but the deal fell through due to opposition from North Korea's committee overseeing its second (military) economy.

In 1996, during the North's 'Arduous March', electricity was not provided to the mine, leading to flooding in the mineshafts. Since 1998, Kim Jong Il has budgeted 8.2 million USD to dewater the mine, and the mine was recovered using electricity and equipment provided by China.

The mine resumed operations in May, 2004, and in March of last year even an ore-dressing plant and crushing facility were constructed, indicating that there were high expectations that production would grow. However, as water filled up at the dam for the near-by Samsoo Powerplant, completed in May, the mines began to flood again.

There was no end to criticism that the powerplant, located in Jangan-Ri, Hyesan, Ryanggang Province, was to be constructed on a limestone foundation that would leech massive amounts of water, however, as a result of its construction, despite this opposition, water leaks out of the power station and has flooded the mine.

In the event that North Korea abandons the Hyesan Chungnyun Mine, it will be faced with the difficulty of needing to import the large amounts of copper required by the manufacturing industry. As this mine began to flood, North Korea has begun to import most of the copper necessary for its economy from Chile.

Currently, there is no feasible way to technically restore the mine, so as senior authorities in the North are demanding that the mine be saved at any cost, those in charge of operations are said to be uneasy.