

DPRK BOLSTERS SOCIAL SECURITY LAWS

Recent transformations in the North Korean economy and society have led the government to draft policies to link the social welfare matrix to the social security law. The 'Democratic Chosun', a publication of the Central Peoples' Standing Committee and the Cabinet, has on five occasions (April 3 and 4, May 14, 16, and 23, 2008) run articles titled, "Regarding the Social Security Law," explaining recent changes to the law and its affects on the North's social welfare.

This law contains six sections and 49 articles, the purpose of which is to strictly establish the structure and methodology of the nation's social security system, and to protect the health of the people while providing them with secure and happy lives. Details of the law have not yet been made available.

North Korea established the National Social Security Law on August 30, 1951, although it was not actually enforced until after the April 14, 1978 Socialist Labor Law was passed. North Korea's social security system is a means with which to control the country's socialist economy, and also acts to restrict the lives of the people, as well. From when the September 8, 1948 Constitution was passed right up until today, North Korea has provided its people with social insurance and social security systems. Society's sick, feeble, and handicapped receive treatment assistance or material support from the social insurance system.

By looking at past transitioning countries, one can see that transforming systems and quickly changing social and economic structures lead to linking of social security with social welfare in order to protect the society's weak. In North Korea, the passing of the July 1, 2002 Economic Management Reform Measures and other sudden changes in the social and economic

environments raised concerns regarding the issue of protecting the country's most vulnerable. Combined with the North's food shortages, the protection of the society's elderly, children, pregnant, and other vulnerable elements has become a special issue of concern for North Korean authorities.