



## **DPRK PRIDE IN THE RYUGYONG HOTEL GROWING**

Once abandoned, considered a failure and an embarrassment, it now appears that North Korea's tallest building will be completed by 2012. The Ryugyong Hotel is becoming the largest symbol of the North's plan to construct a 'Strong and Prosperous Nation' by the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung. The hotel, on the bank of the Botong River, stands 105 stories tall.

An article in the May 11 copy of the Choson Sinbo proclaimed, "Like a phoenix ceaselessly reaching for the sky, the high-rising Ryugyong Hotel is one emblem of North Korea, which is soundly knocking on the door of [becoming] a Strong and Prosperous Nation." The North has set 2012 as the year that door will be swung open. The newspaper described the hotel as a "phoenix" after a May 1 celebration, "We Will Triumph!" at which the hotel was used as the background for a fireworks display.

The paper reported on the "brilliant cannon salute" fired from this "super-highrise" at heights "not imaginable" to the spectators, creating a "picturesque view" of Pyongyang" as the fireworks display created a "grand spectacle" centered on the "magnificent 300m-tall building." This praise is a significant change from the North's previous practices of removing the hotel from pictures and portraits of the city skyline, leaving it off of city maps, and diverting tourist groups around it.

Construction began on the hotel in 1987, but was halted without completion of interior or exterior surfaces in 1992. Since last year, construction has been underway on 10,000 private



residences in Pyongyang as part of its modernization drive, and at the same time, the hotel has been receiving a facelift, with large glass panels being installed on its exterior.