

DPRK Business Monthly

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As a rich man is likely to be a better customer to the industrious people in his neighbourhood than a poor, so is likewise a rich nation. [Trade embargoes] by aiming at the impoverishment of our neighbours, tend to render that very commerce insignificant and contemptible.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*

International

Dutch Mission Eyes NK Food Boost

The Netherlands sent a trade mission to North Korea in October to help the DPRK increase food production, Dutch agricultural economist Doeke Faber told *DutchNews.nl*. He said the trade mission was the first from the Netherlands to try to make inroads into doing business with North Korea. "If we can make life easier for the people there, I have no objections," Faber said.

DPRK Trade Delegation Visits Sweden

A North Korean business and trade delegation visited Sweden in October, on a trip that was partly funded by the Swedish government.

"The participants were from universities, state export companies and the North Korean foreign trade ministry. They were invited by the International Council of Swedish Industry," a Swedish radio station reported.

Among other stops, the delegation visited a Stockholm vegetable wholesaler, who said the North Koreans asked basic questions about the government's control of the economy there, according to the Swedish news site *TheLocal.se*.

"They asked how much we earn, what the average salary is, and many of the questions were about how involved the government is," [marketing director] Benny Olsson said.

"They also asked us if the government decided what the company's maximum salary is."

Sweden was among the first Western nations to establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK.

NK Reaching Out for China Investment

[The following is an edited version of an article published by the Institute for Far Eastern Studies.]

The North Korea-China Economic, Trade, Cultural and Trade Expo was held from October 12 to 16, 2012, in Dandong City, in Northeast China's Liaoning Province. The expo was jointly hosted by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Liaoning Provincial Committee, Liaoning People's Friendship Association, and Dandong Municipal People's Government.

China accounts for 90 percent of North Korea's foreign trade, and approximately 70 percent of this trade goes through Dandong. Currently, Dandong is gaining both domestic and international attention as the construction of the New Yalu River Bridge is nearing completion and progress on the Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa Islands Special Economic Zone is advancing.

The Expo provided a place for not only product exhibits but also consultation on economic and trade cooperation, cultural exchanges and tourism. From the North Korean side, the largest trade investment company and government agency in charge of overseas labor export was in attendance.

Over 500 booths and sections were provided, and over 5,000 foreign buyers attended. Over 100 companies and a 300-member economic-and-trade delegation came from North Korea.

Meanwhile, the DPRK held a briefing session September 25-27 in Beijing, promoting North Korea's special economic zones at Rason, and Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa islands. The session was organized by the North Korean Committee for the Promotion of Economic Cooperation and China's private GBD Public Diplomacy and Culture Exchange Center.

This event was an exclusive, invitation-only event, inviting major Chinese companies with investment interest in North Korea. There were over 100 officials from 30 different state-run corporations from North Korea present at the session to provide detailed information on 50 investment projects. The participants were required to pay an entrance fee, and news media were barred from the event.

Just before the two-day meeting China's Overseas Investment Federation and the North Korea Investment Office signed an agreement to jointly launch the "Special Fund for Investment in North Korea." The Office is an overseas investment body subordinate to the Joint Venture and Investment Committee of North Korea.

According to a Chinese media source, both states have set some US\$476 million as the goal for the fund, but in the initial stage US\$159 million will be utilized first, to

develop urgently needed urban infrastructure facilities focusing on the mining, real estate and port industries.

NGO Initiatives in DPRK:



**American Friends
Service Committee**

Quaker values in action

North Korea Agricultural Program



AFSC Country Representative Wu Na (center) visiting experimental rice fields at Ku-up Cooperative Farm

To bring together both local knowledge and scientific expertise for better results, AFSC works both with the DPRK's Academy of Agricultural Science and four cooperative farms.

AFSC support is based on each farm's specific situation, including key crops, labor force, and natural and economic conditions. Farm trials address the immediate need to increase food production and to protect soil fertility.

Result: By 2009 farmers at the four cooperative farms had planted 250 hectares of experimental fields using a new cultivation method. This method requires only 25% of the seed and fertilizer normally used for seed-bed preparation, and also decreases the labor input needed for transplanting. The average increase has been 0.5t-1t per hectare.

Inter-Korean

ROK Aid Groups Deliver NK Flood Relief

Eleven officials from the Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, an association of 51 private aid groups, traveled to the DPRK border town of Kaesong in early October to monitor the distribution of some 500 tons of flour.

The move came after the South Korean chapter of World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, sent 500 tons of flour to children in flood-hit South Pyongyan Province in September in what was the first such flood aid offer from the South.

The DPRK media have reported that severe floods have killed at least 169 people and left 400 missing.

Still, the DPRK rejected the South Korean government's offer of flour, instant noodles and medicine in the same month, with its state media calling the offer "meager" and "insulting."

N-S Buddhist Monks ``Work to Ease Tension”



South and North Korean Buddhist monks at a ceremony to mark the fifth anniversary of the rebuilding of the Shingye Temple on Mount Kumgang in the DPRK [Photo: Jogye Order]

The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism's (South) Korean Community Advancement Organization and the Central Committee of the (North) Korean Buddhist Federation met at Mount Kumgang's Shingye Temple October 13 for Buddhist services to mark the fifth year since the temple's restoration, the *Hankyoreh* newspaper reported. These joint ceremonies were the first to be participated in by a South Korean Buddhist delegation visiting the North this year.

At the services held that day, Lee Gyu-ryong, chief secretary of the North Korean Buddhist Federation said, “If Buddhists from both Koreas put enough effort into it, there will come a day when this very spot, Shingye Temple, can be reborn as a genuine venue for the reunification of our nation.”

The head of the Jogye Order’s delegation, Ven. Ji-hong, said, “I am dismayed by seeing a shroud of silence brought to the prayers for reunification of Buddhists from both Koreas at Shingye Temple following the suspension of tourism to Mount Kumgang.”

He went on, “With the opportunity provided by joint Buddhist services, Buddhists from both Koreas can combine their energy and insights to preserve Mount Kumgang, which is both a holy site for the people of Korea and a symbol of reunification.”

The two sides also voiced support for the ideals of the June 15 South-North Joint Declaration (at the 2000 South-North summit) and the October 4 South-North Joint Declaration (at the 2007 summit) in their official joint declaration for removing the threat of war from the peninsula.

Their joint statement reads, “We, the Buddhists of both Koreas, will follow the road set forth in the North-South joint declarations through cooperation with a Buddhist heart, to rid our nation of antagonism and suspicion, and tension and combativeness, and will continue our alliance to eliminate the threat of war and guarantee a permanent peace.”

Shingye Temple was destroyed during the Korean War. It was later restored October 13, 2007, through the cooperation of the Jogye Order and the Korean Buddhist Federation. The joint Buddhist services this time were agreed to during talks between Buddhists of both Koreas held at Kaesong October 5.

Meanwhile, *Yonhap* reported that South and North Korean Buddhist groups have agreed to launch a joint project to excavate and restore Buddhist relics in the area of Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea.

The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, the biggest Buddhist sect in the South, struck the agreement in a meeting October 16-17 in Shenyang, China, with the Korean Buddhist Federation, the umbrella group for North Korean sects, according to the South Korean group.

Two ROK Groups to Deliver NK Children’s Aid

Two private South Korean groups have been given approval to send aid goods to North Korean children, Seoul’s Unification Ministry announced.

The approvals were given to Kyeoesarang and the Green Tree Charity Foundation, both local aid groups with missions to assist underprivileged North Koreans, according to the ministry.

Seoul Warns Trade Agency Against North Contacts

South Korea's Ministry of Unification has warned a state-run trade and investment agency to stop interacting with North Korean officials, a government official told the *JoongAng Ilbo* newspaper.

"Some officials of the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA)'s Beijing branch attended a seminar held by North Korean officials on attracting Chinese investment," according to Park Hyeong-il, a Unification Ministry official working at the South Korean Embassy in Beijing. "After that, they met with North Korean officials in Beijing, which violated the current administration's North Korean policy."

"So we warned them," Park said. "We will meet with some South Korean businessmen working in Beijing soon, and ask them not to contact any North Koreans."

This is the first time that a South Korean administration has prohibited the state-run agency from contacting North Koreans since the agency was founded 50 years ago, according to the newspaper. The ministry said it based its warning on the "May 24 sanctions" that ban all unapproved contacts with the North.

Under the sanctions, which were drawn up after the sinking of the ROK warship *Cheonan* in March 2010, the government bans all government and civilian contacts. All contacts with Pyongyang need approval from the Unification Ministry, even for lawmakers.

If anyone contacts a North Korean accidentally, this needs to be reported to the ministry within five days. If not, the ministry can impose a fine of up to three million won (US\$2,720) for a violation of the Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation Act.

KOTRA's office in Beijing told the *JoongAng Ilbo* that they were collecting information to boost cooperation between Southern companies and the North. It said the North Korean officials they encountered were members of the National Economic Cooperation Federation under North Korea's Trade Ministry, which deals with all of Pyongyang's trade and investment in China.

KOTRA said that it planned to distribute the information to South Korean businessmen, but scrapped the plan after being warned.

"Restriction on KOTRA's information-gathering activities hinders South Korean companies from competing with their Chinese rivals," a South Korean businessman in Beijing said.

Domestic

Breast Cancer Institute Completed

The latest addition to the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital is the Breast Cancer Institute. The institute is equipped with two advanced Siemens medical scanners.

The pictures below of the new equipment were taken from North Korean television.



DPRK Bids for More CDMs



Kumya Hydroelectric Plant [Photo: Hans Seidel Foundation]

The DPRK has applied for a second round of carbon credits by completing a hydroelectric plant on the Kumya River in Kumya County, South Hamgyong Province. Build in cooperation with a company from the Czech Republic, the dam will supply electricity to North Korea's Eastern Power Grid. Pyongyang is seeking approval from the United Nations Development Program for inclusion of the plant in the Clean Development Mechanism, as the plant will save on the use of fossil fuels and promote renewable energy.

Importance of Urban Management Systems for NK

[The following is an edited version of a report by Calvin Chua of Choson Exchange.]

Perhaps the latest tourist attraction in Pyongyang is the recently completed neon-lit residential complex in the Mansudae District. Comprising several highrise apartment blocks and communal facilities, the project was part of the leadership's plan to build 100,000 new apartment units by 2012 to mark the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth. While the number of actually built apartments ranges from 25,000 to 30,000, the neon lights nonetheless reveal attempts at developing Pyongyang into a "world-class city."

However, its ambitions are not equally matched by its efforts in urban planning. Although urban development in North Korea has been relatively successful in providing basic housing and civic amenities for the past 50 years, it lacks the dynamism and technological infrastructure required of contemporary cities. Increasingly, cities are becoming more complex, and developing the software infrastructure (data cables, monitoring systems, green technologies, etc.) is becoming equally as important as developing the physical infrastructure (buildings and roads). New business parks are fully wired up and monitored jointly by IBM and Cisco, while the Senseable City Lab in MIT is developing tools for managing urban traffic. The recent proliferations of urban-related indices ranging from livability to sustainability are a testament to the growing importance of urban design and management in providing a suitable environment to attract foreign investments and professionals.



Neon-lit Buildings in the Mansudae District

Major economic cities in North Korea (such as Pyongyang and Rason) are far less sophisticated than some other development zones around the world. In order to be properly functioning and economically competitive, they need to provide better urban management systems beyond physical infrastructure. They would need to consider projects on a longer-term basis since the urban infrastructure provided today will have

social and economic ramifications in future. For example, to rewire or install new technological infrastructure in future would cost much more than planning for future expansion.

However, developing these infrastructures is very capital-intensive, and North Korea would need to depend on external organizations for expertise and investments. While China and Russia have been investing in the physical infrastructure of the Rason economic development zone, the DPRK will need committed partners to develop its technological infrastructure. Already, during a meeting on Land Management, Kim Jong Un called on relevant institutions to conduct “joint study ... with scientific research institutions of other countries and take part in international meetings and symposiums to introduce advanced science and technology.” As such, while the leadership understands the importance of advancing their technology to better manage the city, they need to identify Songdo’s IBM-Cisco equivalent for North Korea.

Such developments do come with strings attached for the DPRK, as the outside companies involved may possibly retain a monopoly over the infrastructural services after partially bearing the initial costs of development. But before North Korea worries about an external organization monopolizing its infrastructure services, it needs to take the first step in developing better urban management systems in order to develop more competitive cities. Neon lights alone will not draw in investments, but better infrastructure that intelligently manages the lighting systems in the city will.

Air Koryo Offers Online Booking

Reuters reported that North Korea's Air Koryo, has finally joined the Internet age with an online booking service, offering flights to and from Pyongyang to Beijing and Shenyang in China as well as Vladivostok in Russia.

The website (www.airkoryo.com.kp/en/home) says it started operations in August and promises "a convenient reservation ... day and night."

The airline uses mainly Russian-built Tupolev aircraft on its international flights, although older, Soviet-era aircraft are also still used domestically.

A business class flight to Beijing is listed online at a price of US\$374.



Consumer Ads Appear in DPRK Press

A North Korean newspaper has in recent weeks run advertisements for clothes and other products in the latest sign that the DPRK is attempting to update its economy, according to the South's *Korea Times*.

The ads in the *Pyongyang Sinmun* include ones for flowers and flowerpots, traditional Korean dress and a water-heating device using solar power.

DPRK leader Kim Jong Un has commented on the need for the North's economy to catch up with "global trends." During a visit to a hosiery factory in July he underscored the importance of trademarks in a rare reference to marketing.

That followed a call by a North Korean economic quarterly for promoting exports through commercials.

Despite a rise in market activities in recent years, the North remains nearly void of ads. Billboards for Pyeonghwa Motors, a joint venture between the North and the South Korea-based Unification Church are among its rare forays into advertisements.

But an increasing consumer culture has been taking root, especially in Pyongyang and mostly through cash earned through increased cooperation with China. Popularity is driven by a growing market culture approved by the government.

Other changes have been made to give the North a more modern feel.

Pyongyang has long proclaimed 2012 as the year it would arrive as a "strong and prosperous" state and concentrated efforts to renovate the capital city with new apartments as well as shopping and recreation facilities. It has revamped its news broadcasts with computerized backdrops.

Economic Zones

NK Raises Kaesong Tax Rates

North Korea has unilaterally revised taxation rates for the inter-Korean industrial complex in Kaesong, raising taxes imposed on companies from the South.

Seoul's Ministry of Unification told the *JoongAng Ilbo* that the North unilaterally altered 117 out of 120 clauses in the regulations, and notified the South Korean government of its decision August 2.

Under the new clauses, North Korea can unilaterally determine how much tax it will levy on the Southern companies, and demand overdue taxes for up to eight years. Some Southern companies are already following the new rules. The Unification Ministry said 19 out of 123 South Korean companies have paid the new tax rates.

“We have to report all of our products’ current prices to the North Korean tax office,” a South Korean businessman told the *JoongAng Ilbo*. “If they think our claims are ‘inappropriate,’ they unilaterally set the prices by themselves and notify us.”

The businessman said that his company reported that the price of a certain product was US\$2, but the North Korean tax office assessed it at US\$3, and demanded additional taxes. He allegedly paid US\$30,000 in so-called “overdue” taxes.

If the Southern companies resist the taxes, the regime threatens to cut off their supplies, the *JoongAng Ilbo* reported.

The taxation is governed by the Law of the Kaesong Industrial Zone signed by the two Koreas in 2004. The law requires agreement on both sides.

The North has also demanded that businesses there pay retirement bonuses to all workers who have quit, even though employers are required to award such payments only to workers whom they have to let go due to business circumstances after they

have worked there for at least one year.

Since the complex opened in 2004 South Korean companies there have paid North Korea US\$245.7 million in salaries for local workers.

Comment

The Republic of Korea's 18th presidential election on December 18 this year looks like being one to bring good news for business people. The leading candidates for all three main parties -- one of whom is sure to be the next ROK president -- have vowed to reverse incumbent President Lee Myung-bak's hardline stance, and restore the thriving trade and tourism relations between the two Koreas that marked the ten-year ``sunshine" period before Lee was elected in 2007. Even Park Geun-hye, frontrunner for the conservative Saenuri (New Era) Party and daughter of assassinated President Park Chung-hee, has acknowledged that a new approach to the North is necessary. In this she senses the mood of the country, alarmed that President Lee's policies have virtually ended the ROK's much-needed business relations with North Korea, and brought the peninsula to the brink of another war.

The other major contenders go even further: Moon Jae-in of the opposition Democratic United Party has told entrepreneurs who run factories in the Kaesong industrial complex in North Korea just north of the demilitarized zone that the complex is the starting point for his key South-North economic alliance program. The program aims to gradually merge the economies of the two countries before full-fledged unification takes place.

Moon, who was chief-of-staff to the previous ROK president, Roh Moo-hyun, has pledged to seek a summit with the North's new leader Kim Jong Un in 2013, as his mentor did with Kim's father in 2007.

The third major contender, Ahn Cheol-su, Independent, has this to say in a book he recently published: ``When peaceful economic cooperation with the North is activated, our domestic market will expand. North Korea could possibly be a source of growth momentum since the [South] Korean economy is currently stagnant. We can take advantage of North Korea's underground resources, tourist attractions and human resources, and a new way could open up for building a North-East Asia economic zone or for a land route from Pusan to Paris. In fact, currently South Korea is much like an island blocked by North Korea. The transportation of export goods or raw materials will become easier when we get connected to the continent. This could be an environment where our economy could jump to a higher level."

Touring North Korea

North Korea Hopes to Attract More Chinese Tourists



Welcoming tourists at a railway station in the DPRK [Photo: telegraph.co.uk]

The *China Daily* reported that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is improving its infrastructure in the hope of attracting more Chinese tourists, according to senior tourism officials from the DPRK.

Hong In Chol, head of the publicity bureau of the DPRK National Tourism Administration, noted that the DPRK offers a wide variety of tourist attractions, ranging from its spectacular natural beauty to its cultural and religious heritage.

He made the remarks at an economic, trade, culture and tourism exhibition held by China and the DPRK in the border city of Dandong in Liaoning Province [See International, above].

"We are trying to promote the modernization of tourism facilities, and have achieved great results. We welcome tourists from the whole world, and especially from China," he said.

The number of Chinese tourists traveling to the DPRK has shot up over the past two years. Some 60,000 to 70,000 Chinese tourists visited the country last year, according to Sin Kyong-jin, head of the DPRK national tourism administration's Dandong office.

"The turning point in the tourism market appeared in 2010, when China listed the DPRK as a tourist destination country. As a result, many travel companies started to explore this mysterious market," said Yang Chunkai, manager of China International Travel Service in Dandong.

Travel to the DPRK used to be a small business and was restricted to Dandong residents, and the DPRK was not positive about it, Yang said.

He added that he expects his company to send 40,000 tourists to the DPRK this year, up from 20,000 in 2010.

Huang Hua, manager of Dandong-based Liaoning Yalu River International Travel Service, said the recently established company serves tourists from across China.

Analysts said that the DPRK has shifted its focus from military to economic development since 2007, and is focusing on developing light industry, agriculture and services.

"The tourism industry needs low input but makes quick profits. This is in line with the DPRK's desire to make safe money as soon as possible," said Lu Chao, a specialist in Korean Peninsula studies at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences.

He said the cross-border tourism industry accounts for around US\$200 million to US\$300 million of Sino-DPRK trade, a figure that keeps rising.

The cost of traveling to the DPRK is also relatively competitive, Lu Chao said, with four-day tours from Dandong to Pyongyang priced at about 2,500 yuan (US\$400).

To attract more tourists, travel agencies from both countries have developed a package of new products.

Train tours between Tumen in Jilin Province and Mount Chilbo in the northeastern DPRK started this April. Since early this year Chinese tourists can drive by themselves to Pyongyang from Yanji, also in Jilin Province, according to local tourism officials.

The DPRK launched its first charter flight from Pyongyang to Yanji in July.

The DPRK has simplified its visa procedures, and Chinese tourists only need to provide a passport.

Tourism industry experts said that as per capita disposable income in China passed the US\$3,000 mark last year, the tourism industry should now enter a period of rapid development.

James Macgregor, a tourism expert with the United Nations Development Program, expressed confidence in the development of the tourism industry in Northeast Asia: "This region represents one of the fastest-growing tourism destinations in the world. The potential for establishing cross-border tourism routes is great with increasing demand from China and other countries," he emphasized.

Choi Hoon, director of the UNDP Tumen Secretariat, said the tourism industry is a good choice for the DPRK, adding that cross-border tourism would enhance regional prosperity and security.

NK Tourism Official in Taiwan

AFP reported that a top tourism official from North Korea visited Taiwan in October to seek charter flights that could carry more tourists to the DPRK.

Jo Song Gyu met travel agents and was interviewed by Formosa TV during his four-day trip to the island.

"Since the distance between North Korea and Taiwan is not far, there's no reason not to have transportation services," said Jo, described by the TV station as being the deputy chief of North Korea's government tourism bureau.

He proposed charter flights that would take Taiwan tourists to Pyongyang when the North celebrates its annual 40-day tourism festival beginning in August next year.



Koryo Tours Special Report - We've been up the Ryugyong!

On September 23 Koryo Tours staff were taken to the top of the enigmatic and oddly iconic 105-story Ryugyong Hotel in Pyongyang. We were the first foreigners allowed to take pictures there and are able to print a handful of shots of the ground floor and the open air-viewing platform more than 300 metres up.

The view was incredible and breathtaking indeed! The inside of the building still has substantial work to be done, but the structure of the lobby and dining area and conference room (all on the ground floor) were visible. Sources at the site suggested 2 or 3 more years until projected completion, at which

time hotel rooms, office space and long term rentals will be available.

Until then, the memories of a view over Pyongyang that many have imagined but few have experienced remain with us. As soon as the building can be occupied we will of course offer tours staying there -- Stay tuned for further info that we'll beam from the top of the tower!





* A trip from the East Coast to the scenic *Kuwol Mountains*.

Spectacular internal charter flight to *Mount Paekdu* - the highest mountain in Korea topped by the highest crater lake in the world. (cycle from the regional airport to the mountainside through forests and along roads and pathways few foreigners have ever seen from a vehicle, let alone on a bike! Ascending to the peak for a picnic lunch, and the rest of the afternoon tour the area by bike, passing waterfalls, the official birthplace of Kim Jong Il and the Chinese border area. This is the most special part of a very special trip.

The itinerary for this tour: http://www.koryogroup.com/travel_Itinerary_2012_cycling1.php
please do have a look and if you are interested in joining this trip please drop us a line at
info@koryogroup.com

If you like cycling and you're interested in seeing North Korea then this could be the one for you. There are no better bragging rights after a trip like this!

Get on your bike and join us. See you in Pyongyang!

You can see some photos of the first-ever trip down the northeastern coastal road from Rason to Chongjin on our FLICKR Photostream at:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/koryo_tours/sets/72157629338457331/

Young Pioneer Tours



While many tours to North Korea take place during the balmy summer months, few visitors get the opportunity to visit during the colder months of winter. During these winter months the country changes completely, freezing over during the peak of January, with snow and ice commonplace. But if that sounds like too much, then visiting at the end of November might be the perfect option for anyone seeking to see the country at a slower pace, away from the summer crowds, and on the cusp of winter change.

Therefore, *NK News* is happy to recommend this Young Pioneer Tours late-November itinerary, one of the latest possible for visitors to take in North Korea before state tourism agency KITC closes for its annual winter break.

End-of-Year Tour

Join us for our very last tour of the year to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the last week of November. This is an extremely action-packed tour, with us visiting Pyongyang, Mount Myohang, Nampho and Kaesong in the space of five days.

Taking place during the last week of November, this trip offers not only a very insightful look into what the country is like and how it copes in winter, but more importantly as it is not the "high season," it gives you the chance to be one of the very few tourists in the country at the time.

Like all of our trips it is possible to swap the train for a flight option. Trip includes us arranging every element of your visa, as well as being led by one of our expert guides.

We are also offering a very nice and compact Dandong Extension, which fits perfectly with the end-of-year tour, and shows you every element of the relationship between the DPRK and China.

We offer discounts for all group and early bookings.

920 Euro -- 4 nights, 5 days, plus two on the train +70 Euro to fly either way

Dandong Extension

195 Euro -- 1 night, 2 days

Inclusive of all tours, transport, guides, and meals

Korea Compass

[The purpose of this section is to provide some background knowledge, especially for people making their first trip to the DPRK. If you know something about what you are going to see beforehand you will greatly impress your hosts, not to mention other foreign visitors, and save yourself having to listen to long-winded explanations when you really want to get down to business. Proverbs have the handy function of offering a quick insight into the thinking and attitudes inherent in a different culture.]

Religion in the DPRK

Contrary to widespread reports, religion is far from dead in North Korea. In the capital, Pyongyang, there are two Protestant churches, one of which is dedicated to Kang Pan Sok, the mother the country's founder Kim Il Sung and a Presbyterian deaconess, and a Roman Catholic church. In addition, a Russian Orthodox church opened in Pyongyang in 2006.

According to government statistics, there are 10,000 practicing Buddhists in the DPRK, about the same number of Protestants and 4,000 Catholics. In addition, there are about 40,000 adherents of Chondogyo, a religion indigenous to the Korean peninsula. The latter has its own political party -- the Chondogyo Chongu Party -- which is represented in the country's parliament.

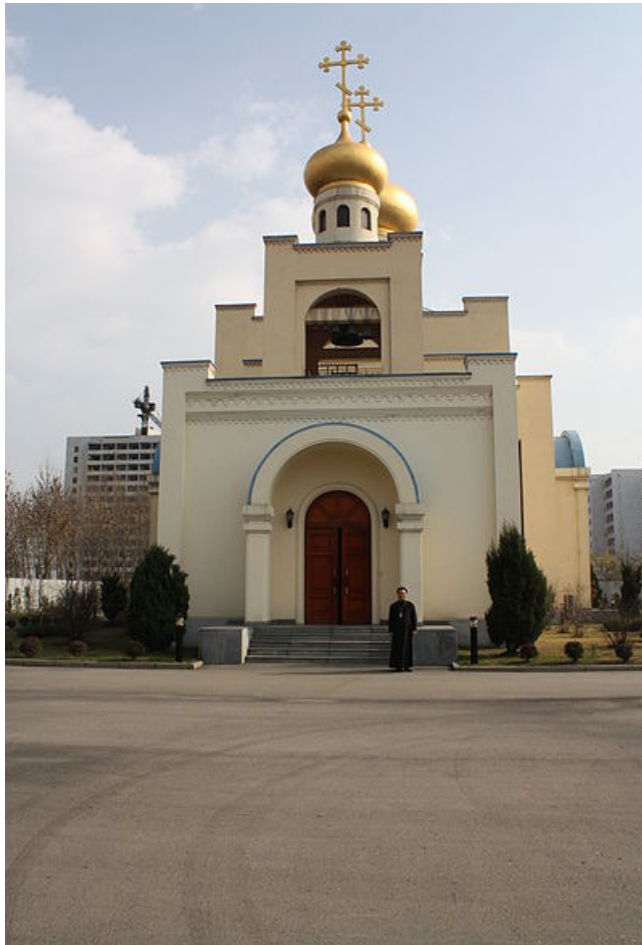
Several schools for religious education exist in the country. There are three-year colleges for training Protestant and Buddhist clergy. A religious studies program was established at Kim Il Sung University in 1989.

There are 300 Buddhist temples in North Korea, most preserved as cultural relics, but some with full-time monks.

It is speculated that religious groups have survived in North Korea because several high-ranking people in the government have been Christians (including Vice-president Kang Ryang Wuk, a Presbyterian minister, and Vice-chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Kim Chang Jun, a Methodist minister).

The Rev. Billy Graham, whose wife attended a Christian school in Pyongyang, met President Kim Il Sung and preached at Kim Il Sung University in 1992 and 1994. His son Franklin has visited Pyongyang three times as head of the US NGO Samaritan's Purse, and preached there.

An interesting footnote concerns the fact that the Pyongyang government published the first Korean-language translation of the Bible (in the 1980s) since foreign missionaries did so in the 19th century.



The Russian Orthodox Church in Pyongyang [Photo: Wikipedia]

Korean Proverb

Han umurul paya hanunira.
(You must dig only one well at a time.)
Concentrate your efforts.