

KOREAS TO VISIT PRC-VIETNAM INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

In an effort to seek new ways to develop the inter-Korean joint industrial complex in Kaesong, it is expected that the first joint complex between China and Vietnam will be inspected in the middle of next month. According to a high-ranking official in the South Korean Ministry of Unification, “If the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) is to be made into an internationally competitive industrial complex, [we] need to take a close look at the processes and structure of the international market,” and, “In order to develop the KIC, we decided to inspect a foreign industrial complex, and the North has agreed.”

This inspection was agreed upon during the second round of inter-Korean working level talks in June, and is being looked at as a breakthrough in restarting talks between officials from the North and the South. The source added, “The thought is that the inspection will be of a China-Vietnam industrial complex,” and, “If this overseas inspection goes well, the 3-C problem (Communication, Conveyance, Customs) and issues of visits and sojourns by South Koreans in the complex, dormitories for the North Korean workers, the construction of roads for coming to and from work, and other issues will be advanced.”

The inspection team will include 10 officials from North Korea and 10 from the South, and plans to visit the site for ten days beginning on the 12th of next month. The South Korean delegation is expected to include representatives from the Ministry of Unification, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy, Korea Land Corporation, and members of the KIC management committee. The agreement between the two Koreas to inspect an overseas industrial zone is seen as a sign that inter-Korean relations are improving. It appears that North Korea is continuing to work toward improving inter-Korean relations.

At the very least, it looks like this inspection will foster an atmosphere in which Seoul and Pyongyang can resolve all of the problems, listed above, surrounding the KIC. In June of 2007, 14 Koreans, 7 from the North and 7 from the South, spent ten days and nine nights inspecting the joint Chinese-Vietnamese industrial complex, so expectations are that this visit will further boost inter-Korean relations and KIC competitiveness.