



Increase in North Korean Male Workers in Kaesong Industrial Complex

The number of male workers in Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) increased according to the Ministry of Unification (MOU). Since the establishment of the complex, women made up 84-85 percent of the total work staff. But from last May, the number fell below 80 percent and currently is around 74 percent.

In contrast, the number of male workers steadily increased from 15 percent from last year to 26 percent, an increase of over 10 percent.

Out of the new hires of all of last year, 56 percent were male. Even sewing factories generally dominated by female employees began to accept male workers.

Many of the South Korean companies in Kaesong preferred young female workers over male for higher work efficiency; but with declining manpower, more male workers are being hired than previously.

An official from the MOU stated, “We are facing difficulties with labor supply lately,” and added, “Many are even coming from Pyongyang in addition to the nearby areas of Kaesong.”

The total production output of Kaesong Complex reached 323.32 million USD last year, an increase of 26 percent against the previous year.

Kaesong is a popular employment spot for the North Koreans due to its higher wages and extra perks including coupons exchangeable for daily necessities and free coffee and snacks.

The MOU official also noted that even in times of troubled inter-Korean relations, North Korean officials and workers on several occasions have expressed their hopes for the KIC to continue. “KIC is a space we acquired from the North for the purpose of fulfilling our national strategy. We need to be more proactive in utilizing this opportunity to its full potential.”

On the other hand, North Korea sent a letter proposing working-level talks on the industrial complex to the South earlier last month. In the letter the North expressed, “We



hope for your active support to resume the working-level talks of the Kaesong Industrial Complex at the earliest possible date to revitalize the currently stagnant business. We look forward to your positive response.”

On January 8, the DPRK officially proposed for the resumption of KIC working-level talks at the earliest possible date through a statement made by the spokesperson of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea. Specifically, late January or early February was suggested.

On January 18, the **Central Special Zone** Development Guidance of North Korea also proposed through its representative for working-level talks related to the KIC to be held in Kaesong on February 9.

The request from the DPRK is analyzed to be an attempt to relax restrictions prohibiting new businesses and investments in the KIC from the “May 24 Sanctions” that the South Korean government put into effect in 2010 following the sinking of the South Korean naval corvette Cheonan in March of last year.