

Science and Technology and Improving the Lives of the North Korean People

North Korea designated this year as the “year of light industry” in an effort to increase consumer goods production and enhance the lives of the people. In addition, a June 23 editorial in the Rodong Sinmun reiterated the importance of science and technology for building a strong and powerful nation and improving the lives of citizens.

Science and technology was mentioned as one of the three pillars for building a strong and powerful nation -- the other two being ideology and advanced weaponry.

The editorial emphasized, “We must construct a self-reliant economy and stand on our own two feet no matter what,” and stressed that production system of Juche steel and Juche fertilizers is a victory for the Juche ideology and the science and technology policy of North Korea.

In addition, the column highlighted the importance of promoting Juche, modernization, and informatization in all sectors. “Modern successes in science and technology must be fully adopted and institutionalized in order to enhance production and economic effectiveness. To do so, we must engage in the fight for conserving energy, fuels, materials and national resources.”

The role of scientists and technicians was also accentuated. The future development of science and technology and construction of a strong and powerful economy was depicted to be in the hands of this group. In particular, importance for science research in light industry, agriculture, people’s economy, and modernization for industries was further highlighted.

“To meet the demand of modern times of integrating science and technology and production, technological revolutionary movement must be started and combine the collective knowledge of producers and masses.” It was said that the core and fundamental technology (information, nano, and bioengineering technologies) along with cutting-edge technology (new materials, energy, and space science technologies) must be incorporated to fully contribute to the building of a powerful socialist state.

This editorial appears as an attempt to encourage the growth of production in light and agriculture industries in order to meet the goal of reaching the “strong and powerful nation” by 2012. In this year’s New Year Editorial, revolutionary development in science and technology, tight integration of science and technology with production, revolution of light industry and development of people’s economy through science research were mentioned as chief objectives of the year. It was said that significant weight will continue to be placed on the economy and technology including “integration of science and technology and production” and “technological revolutionary movement of the masses.”