

Mansudae Apartment Construction: In the Final Stages?

North Korea announced that the apartment construction in the Mansudae area in Pyongyang is in the completion stage. This has been touted as a part of the effort in building a powerful nation. North Korea announced in January 2008 of its plans to construct 100,000 apartment units in Pyongyang by 2012 to provide housing for the residents.

The *Rodong Sinmun*, a mouthpiece of the Workers' Party of Korea, announced on March 24 that, "The completion of Pyongyang Mansudae Apartment Complex is right before our eyes," and "presenting a magnificent view of the new road in Pyongyang."

North Korea is busily preparing for the centennial of Kim Il Sung's birth on April 15, gathering military and youth brigades, and university students to the Mansudae area. When completed, it will house 14 high-rise apartments, convenient facilities and parks in the region.

According to a source in North Korea, "The apartment construction in Mansudae is built differently from the slipform method commonly found in the apartment construction in South Korea. It incorporates a combination of concrete and PC (precast concrete) method."

The PC method uses less concrete than the reinforced concrete method. North Korea opted to use this method, as it is seen as a better choice for North Korea, which has limited construction equipment (such as concrete mixers and vehicles), and because of the tight time constraint.

Since the seventieth birthday celebration of Kim Jong Il on February 16, North Korea introduced newly constructed buildings and industrial facilities as a symbol of the strong and prosperous nation and as an achievement of Kim Jong Un's leadership.

On February 23, *Rodong Sinmun* published an article, "Mansudae area will provide housing for the workers," and "The nearly completed high-rise apartment is standing tall, boasting to the world of the greatness of our everlasting socialism under the respected Comrade Kim Jong Un."

In another article, the news reported, "The new road in the Mansudae area incorporates the paramount importance of the people and the masses. We will wholeheartedly remember our Father and Dear Leader Kim Jong Il's love for his people through the new road." It added, "At the behest of our General and under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, we are full of determination to construct a powerful socialist nation providing happiness to all the people on our land."

Such statements are regarded as a movement to idolize Kim Jong Un, by acclaiming the construction of new buildings as emblematic of his accomplishment in building a strong and prosperous nation.

This is similar to what occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s, when there was construction of large-scale buildings including the Juche Tower, Monument to the Party Foundation, the West Sea Floodgate, and the Arch of Triumph. All these buildings were attributed as achievements of Kim Jong Il.