

NORTH KOREAN CIVIL SERVANTS PUT TO THE TEST

North Korea has finally taken steps toward quality assurance in government offices, and last year implemented evaluation measures for government employees. On November 23, 2005, the North Korean Supreme People's Committee Presidium passed a measure (no. 1397) establishing a system for evaluating civil servants, and this year the government has been aggressively implementing tests.

Civil servant evaluations have existed in some manner since the July 1, 2002 economic reform measures were passed, when regulations were put in place in order to cut back on economic irregularities on the part of individual workers, and to increase overall efficiency among civil servants.

The government announced this most recent measure through the publication of the "2006 Chosun Democratic People's Republic Legal Code." North Korea first publicized its legal code in August 2004, when it introduced 112 laws. Since then, an additional fifteen new laws and thirty-two revisions to existing measures have been announced.

The law on civil servant evaluations contains twenty-two articles, the first of which states that the measure is being implemented and enforced in order to strictly evaluate the skills of civil servants in order to raise standards. According to the measure, those subject to evaluation include civil servants serving under the cabinet, ministries, or central administration offices as well as those in positions in provincial, city, and other relevant agencies.

Among other qualities, evaluators look for an understanding of government policies and laws relevant to an individual's position, specific knowledge of one's ministry or office, leadership skills, business sense, active enforcement of policies, and morality.

The law allows for the revocation of a civil servant's qualifications if they fail, or avoid without legitimate cause, evaluations. These evaluations are scheduled every three years, with postponement up to five years in special cases, and include both written and verbal exams as well as practical exams in some instances. The responsibility for standardized and clear-cut evaluation practices is placed on individual administrative organs, while at the same time, these offices are given a venue for redress if necessary.