

Juche Philosophy Study Committee of India

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Travel memoir -Pyongyang, D.P.R. of Korea

(The intent is to showcase the personal viewpoints and thoughts of a traveller as candidly as possible.)

Multiple visits in two decades and experiencing a different side of the DPRK (a lonely planet as popularly known) during each visit. I, indeed consider myself lucky to be amongst the third generation from my family to be associated with the DPR of Korea, and thereby, got numerous opportunities to visit and explore this beautiful country. My journey from India to the DPRK is usually via China where I board Air Koryo, their domestic flight to the DPRK which has its own charm with soothing and enchanting music during the journey.

Over the years, I've seen marked progress in every field and people are enjoying a better standard of living in the DPRK. I reminisce my last visit on the occasion of 70th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea where the celebrations happened in absolutely spectacular manner.

* Soldiers marched, people and teenagers danced at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, during the parade to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

* Planes formed the number "70" in the sky during a parade to celebrate the 70th anniversary.

* After a 21-gun salute, dozens of infantry units marched through Kim Il Sung Square. People danced and cheered during the entire event.

* The jets trailed red, white and blue smoke — the colours of the DPRK flag roared above the Juche Tower.

* Post the parade thousands of citizens rallied through Kim Il Sung square, alongside floats displaying peace and economic development theme and called for Korean reunification.

* In the evening, spectacular "mass games" -a beautifully choreographed performance involving approximately 17,000 dancers and acrobats was held at May Day Stadium. The performances, as well as a trade show in the event had renewed

focus on peace and economic development.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that people in the DPR of Korea live life king size. Despite of sanctions imposed upon them people are leading a joyous and contented life. My first hand impression of the various places I visited, their development during these years and the life as seen from close quarter is as cited-

Kumsusan Palace of the Sun-On the outskirts of Pyongyang stands the huge Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, one of the largest mausoleums in the world. The palace was built in 1976. People here pay respect to Eternal President Kim Il Sung and the Eternal General Secretary Kim Jong Il. The inside of the palace is characterized by vast halls, high ceilings, grand staircases and opulent decoration throughout the myriad of rooms. Beyond the mausoleum chambers, there are rooms showcasing honorary titles, medals, and achievements that each leader received during their lives. There is a ceremonial hall that includes statues of each leader, a hall of lamentation, and rooms highlighting the trips taken locally and abroad by each leader.

* Pyongyang Metro -Pyongyang Metro is among the deepest metros in the world, with the track at over 110 metres (360 ft) deep underground. The Pyongyang Metro is a living and breathing organism of the city. Although it has incredibly vibrant and charming characteristics, it can also be rather intense during peak hour with an average of 300,000 to 600,000 passengers each day. Riding the metro is an experience within itself. The locals are a mix of office workers, grandparents, families, school students, or military men and women.

* Juche Tower, Native home of President Kim Il Sung, Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum, Ryugyong Ophthalmic Hospital are few places which I always visit during my each visit.

* Silk Mill -an apt example of women empowerment in DPRK where over 2,500 female workers are employed. Each person, whether a male or a female does their job with utmost honesty and sincerity and there could be no dereliction of duties.

* Education system-DPRK grounds for an education system that provides free tuition, preschool care, and learning supplies to the children of working-class families, peasants, the military, and other groups.

Today the DPRK puts emphasis on Scientific and Technological Advancement, and the country's education system is divided into four categories: preschool education (pupils aged 3 and 4), primary and secondary school education (5-17), higher education, including post-doctoral degrees (18-25), and adult/vocational education. The education system comprises lower and upper kindergarten, primary school,

secondary school, universities, graduate schools, and research institutions. Parallel to full-time schooling, there is an on-the-job study system (e.g., schools adjunct to factories, farms, and fisheries) finally, vocational and adult education takes place at university-affiliated night courses and communication departments while all institutions are expanding through distance learning.

* Housing in DPRK-The government own all real estate, and give everyone rights to occupy a home, free of cost, the location, size and quality of home depends by your job. Nobody is homeless or begging. Cost of living is almost ZERO. Pyongyang is well planned city with wide boulevards, massive apartment buildings with large open spaces and even more massive monuments, good public transport, smooth traffic and low pollution due to very few cars.

* Mansudae Apartment built at Changjon Street is the most famous residential development. Several old buildings were demolished in 2011 and 15 glass-facade buildings in various heights up to 44 floors were built in just 9 months.

* Kim Cheak Apartment, even taller, 46 floors, was built in 2014, completed with Mirae Scientists Street Unha Tower in 2015, with 53 floors according Emporis.

* Ryomyong Street, a new iconic development was announced in March 2016, it was completed in March 2017. Some old low-rise apartment buildings were demolished, 40 new apartments buildings were built and other 33 older buildings mostly from 2000s were refurbished. Tallest building is 82 floors and 270 meters tall, it was built in just 74 days.

To be candid, I personally found that the Korean people are enjoying good life thanks to the popular policies and benefits of the state, and that all of them are totally committed and loyal to their leader and the country is growing manifolds under the wise leadership of the H.E. General Secretary Kim Jong Un.

I have firm conviction that the Korean people will always stand united around the respected H.E. General Secretary Kim Jong Un with the banner of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism to achieve greater success for the prosperity of their country in the henceforth.



(VIPIN GUPTA)

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