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Nation building the Korean way

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SEPTEMBER 9 1999 marks the 51st anniversary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

This country was founded by our Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung who organised and led the anti-Japanese struggle for two decades. He was responsible for liberating Korea from the Japanese colonial rule on August 15 1945.

On this special day, I would like to take the opportunity to explain the fundamental principles of our nation building and other activities, the issue of Korean reunification and the future direction of the DPR of Korea.

But before that, let me touch a little upon the improving relations between the DPRK and Malaysia.

The DPRK established a diplomatic relationship with Malaysia on June 30 1973. The event saw the start of the exchanging of visits by the leaders of our two nations. The friendly relationship between our two countries has been favourably developing ever since.

In particular, it has further developed through the mutual visits of high level delegations. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad visited Pyongyang in June 1979 when he was the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Our former Premier of the Administration Council of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Yon Yhong Muk had visited Malaysia in February 1991. This was followed by various cross-visits by leaders from both nations involving ministers, government officials and businessmen.

We treasure and appreciate the amicable relationship with Malaysia. The government and people of Malaysia, with all sincerity, had assisted our country in 1997 when it was hit by a continuous natural disaster, and when it faced economic difficulties.

Our government and people would like to express our gratitude for such assistance - which we will never forget.

We are happy to note the progress and achievement being made by Malaysia under the leadership of Dr Mahathir, with due hope that this country would attain the objective of emerging as a developed nation by the year 2020. At the same time, we are also impressed with the speedy recovery of the Malaysia's economy.

And like Malaysia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is also moving towards developing our people and nation. We are a socialist country, independent in politics, self-supporting in the economy and self-reliant in national defense.

The Government follows an absolutely independent course of political action and formulates all its policies accordingly. We resolve all problems in our own way, and this attitude is in no way a reproduction or imitation of others or dictated by them.

On the principle of a self-supporting economy, we have built an independent national economy. It completed its industrialisation process about three decades ago, and ensured 98 per cent of the domestic demand for machines and equipment in the late 1970s.

The economy has solid foundations because it is administered wholly by our own qualified people and buttressed by our national resources.

At a time when other socialist countries had relied on the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and the "nuclear umbrella" of the former Soviet Union, the

DPRK chose to build its own strong defense capabilities on the principles of self-reliant defense.

It has followed a policy of self-defense, thereby firmly establishing an all-people, all-state defense system throughout the country.

The Korean nation has no other supreme task than reunifying the country. This is because it is a matter of life and death for the nation. The Korean nation consists of one ethnic group who has the same ancestral blood and the same language and has inhabited the same territory for thousands of years.

It has strong national identity, too. Its division is abnormal from every point of view. All the people of Korea want reunification whether they live in the North, South or abroad.

By far, the Government of the DPRK has put forward the three-point principles of the country's reunification, namely the common programme of the reunification of the nation which is agreeable to both the North and South, free from any foreign forces; and a solution which is peaceful and free from any use of armed forces, irrespective of differences in ideology, ideal and system.

Therefore, no matter how the international situation changes, the reunification of Korea should be achieved only on the basis of the three-point principles of the country's reunification plan. No one has the right to go against it.

However, the DPRK is against any presence of foreign forces in Korea. After Japan's surrender in the Second World War, the US army and the former Soviet army were stationed in the south and north of the Korean Peninsular respectively to solve post-war problems in accordance with an "agreement" signed by the Allied forces at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences.

The Soviet Union then withdrew from the north, and the Chinese People's Volunteers who fought in the Korean War (1950-53) also pulled out of the north. But the US army still remains in South Korea in the pretext of stopping the military expansion of the former Soviet Union.

If this is right, then today, when such an "enemy" does not exist and the Cold War is over, there are no grounds for the US to maintain or reinforce its troops in South Korea.

If the US sincerely wants peace, peaceful reunification and security of the Korean Peninsular, it should withdraw its troops from South Korea as soon as possible.

Under present conditions, the US has no grounds to continue occupying South Korea.

The North has no intention to invade the south and no plans for "southward invasion" have been found.

We are a friendly nation. As we see the south as a part of Korea, there is not need for both - the north and south - to be engaged in prolonged confrontation which was ignited by a foreign power.

However, under such a circumstances, it is hence a universal phenomenon for a country to strengthen its army. This is especially vital for Korea. The US troops are stationed in the south of Korea.

But the Korean people - regardless of the north and south - know this better than others. They are the ones who want reunification because they know very well the benefits awaiting them.

The Korean people maintain that self-support helps towards the happiness of all generations to come. It is impossible to conduct gigantic enterprises for the future welfare of the nation on the strength of others and the dependent economy and foreign debts must not be bequeathed to posterity.

The DPRK has now built powerful economic foundations with much effort

being on its own. Its major districts have mammoth coal and ore mines, power stations, metalworking and machine-building factories, chemical plants and light industry.

All its cities also have a great number of medium and small local industries which rely on the raw materials and resources locally available.

We look at Malaysia's development programme with great admiration and respect. The Government of Dr Mahathir always emphasises on the need to utilise local resources to implement its development programme, and gives priority to locally made products.

Malaysia has prospered ever since its Independence. And the DPRK, too, would like to ensure that all its people have equal access to development. We are greatly confident that the relationship between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Malaysia will further bring more fruits in the near future. As long as we maintain such a cooperation, then both countries will continue to be friends forever.

* The writer is the North Korean Ambassador to Malaysia.

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