

KIM JONG IL

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
RAISED BY THE PRESIDENT
OF KYODO NEWS SERVICE**

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

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I feel grateful that you have presented a written questionnaire to me on the eve of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's visit to Korea.

Several of the questions you raised will be discussed at the meeting between Prime Minister Koizumi and me, so I would like to answer only the questions related with the relationship between Korea and Japan.

The world attention is now focused on Korea, and interest in our forthcoming meeting is running high.

Korea and Japan are geographically close countries, and they had maintained relations from olden times exchanging visits with each other. But in the past century discord and confrontation has brought the relations between the two countries to an extremely abnormal state. The abnormal relations continuing between them even after half a century after the Second World War are, in every respect, harmful to either of them. Normalizing relations between the two countries and developing good-neighbourly relations accords with the aspirations and interests of the peoples of the two countries, and it is an urgent demand of the times.

Korea and Japan are Asian nations. They should live in friendship as nearest neighbours, not as near and distant neighbours, and promote coexistence and coprosperity. This is our will and consistent standpoint.

The politicians of Korea and Japan are now entrusted with the historic mission to normalize the abnormal relations between the two countries. If responsible statesmen make decisions from a large point of view and get down to the task in order to realize the people's desires and interests and fulfil their noble historic mission, they will be able to find solutions to any problems existing between the two countries.

Prime Minister Koizumi will soon visit Pyongyang, and this will be a turning point in normalizing Korea-Japan relations. I welcome his visit to my country and believe that our meeting will bring forth good fruit. We must open up a new chapter in the historical relationship between Korea and Japan by our common will and joint effort to improve their relations in every possible way.

The basic problem that must be solved to normalize Korea-Japan relations is to clean up the past unpleasant events that have taken place between the two countries. If nothing is done to the history of rancour that has accumulated for a whole century, neither the normalization of state relations nor good-neighbourly, friendly relations can be realized. Japan's settlement of its past necessitates a sincere apology and due compensation that takes into full consideration the whole range of damages and sufferings it inflicted upon the Korean people. The lack of solution to these core issues has so far curbed improvement of the bilateral relations and presented a variety of complicated problems.

The two countries are now tied up hand and foot, trapped as they are in mudslinging over minor issues, but these will be settled smoothly when bilateral relations improve and mutual confidence is built.

An end to abnormal relations will also dissipate the security concerns of the Japanese people. Apparently the Japanese people are highly nervous about our defence build-up, but our defence policy is, to all intents and purposes, geared to self-defence. Our armed forces will mercilessly deal with those who provoke us, but we will never resort to force of arms against those who do not. If Japan gives up hostility for friendship towards us, it has nothing to fear about our defence upbuilding.

Finally, as for your question about my intention to visit Japan,

I think there would be no reason why I should not visit Japan so long as bilateral relations develop favourably on a normal track.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to ask you to convey to the Japanese people my wishes for their peace and prosperity.