

KIM JONG IL

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
RAISED BY ITAR-TASS**

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I am grateful that ITAR-Tass has requested an interview with me.

I will be very pleased to answer your questions.

First, I would like to talk about the relationship between Korea and Russia, and the prospects for its development.

Korea and Russia are neighbours who have maintained traditional friendly relations for a long time. The development of these relations fully accords with the interests of the peoples of the two countries, and is of great significance in ensuring peace and security in Asia and the rest of the world. We set great store by the friendship between Korea and Russia, and pay close attention to the development of relations between the two countries.

The Pyongyang summit of the leaders of the two countries held in July last year was a landmark in developing the friendly relations between the two countries to a new and higher stage.

The visit to Pyongyang by President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the first by a Russian head of state, made a great contribution to the development of the relations between the two countries, and we highly appreciate it. Proceeding from our common determination and stand with regard to the further development of our friendly and cooperative relationship, President Putin and I had candid talks, deepening our mutual understanding and confidence.

At the summit meeting we had an open-hearted exchange of opinions concerning bilateral relations and a series of international issues of mutual concern. As a result of our discussions, we signed the DPRK-Russia Joint Declaration, in which we made public the common determination and desire

of the governments and peoples of our two countries to develop the friendly and cooperative relations to a new and higher stage, and clarified our common view of and stand on important international issues.

The Joint Declaration and the DPRK-Russia Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation signed in February last year are historic documents that provide a guarantee for promoting the friendly relations between Korea and Russia. Clearly defining the principle and direction of the development of friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries, the declaration and the treaty deal comprehensively with political and foreign relations, national defence and security, mutual economic cooperation and trade issues, and all other matters arising in the development of bilateral relations. The declaration and the treaty created an opportunity to develop the friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries in all fields on the principle of complete equality, mutual benefit, mutual confidence and noninterference in each other's affairs.

The future of the friendly relations between Korea and Russia is very bright. Since the Pyongyang summit broad sections of the societies in both countries have displayed unprecedented enthusiasm for developing the relationship between the two. In accordance with the spirit of the declaration and the treaty, practical measures have been taken by the two countries concerning cooperation in the fields of the economy, military affairs, science, technology, education and culture. Since the two countries' determination to develop the relations of friendship and cooperation is unshakable, guaranteed by the declaration and the treaty, and they have a decades-long tradition of close cooperation, they can develop their relations comprehensively if positive measures are taken.

We believe that the Korea-Russia relationship will be strengthened remarkably in the new century, the 21st century, by the joint efforts of the governments and peoples of the two countries.

Dialogue between state leaders plays an important role in developing relations between countries. If the leaders maintain a close relationship with one another, their countries and peoples will inevitably establish friendly ties. I am going to visit Russia soon at the invitation of President Putin. I am pleased that I will be visiting Russia and meeting President Putin again in Moscow. Meeting the friendly people of Russia will be an emotional moment for me. I am sure that the upcoming Moscow summit will be an important occasion for cementing relations between the leaders of the two countries, which were established in Pyongyang last year, and for further promoting Korea-Russia friendship.

As for the question of the United States' establishment of its missile defence system, I shall touch upon the question since the United States is provoking us as part of this development.

The United States is now raising the so-called missile threat from our country and some others in an attempt to justify the setting up of the missile defence system. We are informed that in pursuit of its aims the United States is trying to abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which it concluded with Russia.

The United States' attempt to establish the missile defence system has now become a target of worldwide denunciation because it may renew the arms race.

We support Russia's stand of maintaining strategic stability through the ABM Treaty.

The United States' accusation of a "missile threat" from

our country is totally unfounded. It is nothing but a lie to hide its intention to dominate other countries. No matter how much noise they make, saying, “North Korea is threatening the United States by means of missiles,” and therefore “The United States is trembling with anxiety and fear,” nobody will believe it. Worse still, the new US administration is now talking about the “threat” of our conventional armed forces, not satisfied with the nonsense about “north Korea’s missile threat.” That is preposterous. It is another outrageous challenge to us.

Our missile programme is of a purely peaceful nature. It threatens nobody. Implementing a peaceful missile programme is an exercise of our legitimate sovereign right. The world knows that we are not threatening the United States, but that the United States is constantly threatening us by occupying half of our country by force of arms.

You have also asked about the prospect of normalizing relations between our country and the United States and Japan. That depends entirely on the policies and attitudes of the latter two countries.

The new US administration has resumed its policy of isolating and stifling the DPRK in the new century, a policy that had already proved to be bankrupt in the 20th century, and is obstructing the improvement of DPRK-US relations, aggravating the tense situation instead. The hardline policy pursued by the United States to bring pressure to bear on us is a futile attempt that failed yesterday and will fail today as well. Our consistent stand is to approach good will with good will and respond to a hard line with a harder line.

Our independent foreign policy is consistent and principled. No matter how the situation may change, and no matter what challenges we may encounter, we will maintain

the sovereignty and dignity of our country and confidently advance along the road we have chosen. We will develop good-neighbourly, friendly relations with all countries on the basis of mutual respect for independence, and make efforts to improve relations with the countries which have previously been hostile towards us, provided they respect our sovereignty and discard their hostile policy.

A prerequisite for improving our relations with Japan is that it should atone for the crimes it committed against our country and nation. To try to improve relations with Japan while ignoring its criminal past does not make sense. The present reactionary rulers of Japan are manoeuvring recklessly to put a pretty facade on and justify their shameful past, to bury their crimes forever.

If Japan takes a sincere attitude towards the question of redressing its past, in line with global trends, and gives up its hostile policy and acts towards our country, the relationship between Korea and Japan can be improved.

Finally, you have asked me how I spend my leisure time and what my hobbies are.

Frankly speaking, I have a lot of work to do. Shouldering the lifetime mission of the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, we must build a great, prosperous and powerful socialist state on our land and achieve national reunification as soon as possible. That reality does not allow me to waste time before we have built a great, prosperous and powerful state, and achieved national reunification.

As for my hobbies, I am fond of mixing with the people and soldiers, and spending time with them. I find my life worth living and get most pleasure when I learn how they live and work, and take care of them, talking with them and sharing their feelings. I also like books and music. Reading

and listening to music are a part of my life and a source of inspiration for my work.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my greetings to the Russian people, and wish them success in their struggle to build a powerful Russia and a better life.