

Revolutionary Success in the Light Industry Emphasized for 2011 – Luxury Brands Appearing in Pyongyang

The KCNA reported on December 14, that the light industry has achieved “revolutionary success” this year. The news provided detailed descriptions of light industry products produced this year, emphasizing that “modernization of consumer goods was emphatically promoted through the construction of light industry factories.”

The news emphasized that three product shows -- Second Product Exhibition Show of Pyongyang Department Store No. 1, the Autumn Commodity Fair in Pyongyang Underground Shop, and the National Consumer Goods Exhibition -- demonstrated the increase in production of high quality light industry and consumer products. In the 2011 New Year Address, North Korea announced of its plans to push forward with development in the light industry sector.

Particularly in 2011, high-end luxury goods began to appear in department stores. The state-operated and the largest department store in North Korea, Pyongyang Department Store No. 1, is selling a wide variety of items from electronic goods including LCD TVs, computers, and USBs to western food including bread and cakes. This was confirmed in an August 3 article of the *Rodong Sinmun*, which featured a picture of Kim Jong Il’s onsite inspection of the department store.

From last February, the Botong River Department Store (established in 2010) has also begun to sell high-end luxury brands such as Chanel and Armani. However, details on how these items entered the market are unknown. In addition, the visitors to the city have also confirmed that German chocolates, mustards, and baby diapers are also reported to be sold in the department stores.

Moreover, western-style restaurants and stores are reportedly increasing in Pyongyang. There are western restaurants and coffee shops in the city which are run as joint-operations by international organizations and foreign companies. They are frequented mostly by party officials, traders, and foreigners; very few patrons are North Korean.

At the Korean Central History Museum, Vienna Coffee Shop first opened in October 2010, and in May 2011, a luxurious fine-dining restaurant opened and is operated by Korea Hana Electronics Joint Venture Company, which also has beauty parlors, a sauna, and a swimming pool in the facility. In June 2010, Samtaesong Fast Food Restaurant opened its doors, which is a joint project involving a Singaporean company. In addition, a DPRK-Italy joint venture company, CORITAL, opened Haeun Italian Specialty Restaurant in Pyongchon-district in Pyongyang City in January 2010. An international aid organization, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), has been operating the Pyolmuri Café in Pyongyang since 2005.