

Give Top Priority to Rescuing Abductees

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Nine days have passed since the death of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il (if the Pyongyang-announced date for his death is correct). Mourning events hosted by his third son, Kim Jong Un, who heads the National Funeral Committee, have so far made smooth headway. Just as after the death of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il's father, the death of Kim Jong Il was announced through a special broadcast, the corpse in a glass case was made open to the public, the funeral was set for the 11th day after the death and a memorial ceremony was scheduled for the 12th day.

Mourning events instructed by Kim Jong Il?

Just before Kim Il Sung's death, he and Kim Jong Il were said to have confronted with each other over foreign and economic policies. Having known that citizens had starved to death, Kim Il Sung apparently had been about to switch to a more accommodative foreign policy and give domestic priority to livelihood improvement.

Among mourning events for Kim Il Sung, the government suddenly announced a decision to postpone a memorial ceremony on the day just before the earlier scheduled date for the ceremony. Kim Jong Il's step-mother, Kim Song Ae, was listed as widow of Kim Il Sung in the top bracket of National Funeral Committee members. A mourning period for Kim Il Sung lasted as long as three years. These unusual developments might have been designed for political propaganda to emphasize Kim Jong Il's devotion to his father. Under his unshaken dictatorship, Kim Jong Il purged tens of thousands of officials including aides to his father. He also proceeded with nuclear weapons development while suspending the ration system and leaving 15% of North Korean population to starve to death.

Mourning events for Kim Jong Il have been following those for Kim Il Sung apparently because Kim Jong Il anticipated his death in the not-so-distant future after a stroke in 2008 and instructed his aides how to

proceed events after his death.

Stability may be uncertain for one year

The smooth mourning events for Kim Jong Il can be interpreted as an extension of his dictatorship, indicating Kim Jong Un has yet to establish his own dictatorship. One cannot be given the power but must wrest it. Kim Jong Il's personal dictatorship has to end on his death. He had been aware of this theory and held a meeting of Workers' Party of Korea leaders in an effort to pave the way for Pyongyang to shift from his personal dictatorship to the party's dictatorship. But the effort has been incomplete. Therefore, the stability of the Kim Jong Un regime will remain uncertain for at least one year.

China has promptly vowed to support Kim Jong Un. Behind the scene, Beijing might have been pressing Pyongyang to make a policy shift. It has already urged Kim Jong Un to visit China in a manner to pay tribute. In South Korea, conservatives now have a growing sense of crisis as many leftist organizations and political parties have emerged to take the teeth out of the national security law that defines North Korea as a rebel organization and punish Pyongyang supporters.

In Japan, former diplomats and scholars have called for normalizing its relations with North Korea in a manner to simultaneously solve all problems. But Japan must urgently rescue Japanese abductees in North Korea before coming up with the normalization. The efforts to rescue Japanese abductees made a partial progress when then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited North Korea in 2002 because Tokyo at that time vowed to reject normalization talks unless information about Japanese abductees is provided. Japan must hold fast to the principle of rescuing the abductees before starting normalization talks with North Korea.

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