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According to a Seoul-Pyongyang News report on February 8, a Chinese resident in Sinuiju, North Pyongan Province, who is currently visiting China, told Radio Free Asia that the supply of electricity in North Korea began to deteriorate in January and that since the middle of the month the water supply was completely suspended due to the lack of power.

"Even if electricity is not supplied, lighting is possible with solar power, but the problem is that there is no supply of tap water," the same source said. "People living in high-rise apartments are suffering more than those living in conventional houses," he added.

People can draw ground water from the well. However, since elevators in high-rise apartments are not functioning due to the power shortage, those residents must carry water on their back while climbing several flights of the stairs.

Until last year, people could buy bottled water that North Korean truck drivers smuggled in from China. But this year even that has become difficult due to the international sanctions. It is said to be difficult to find such bottled water in North Korea ever since the Chinese customs authorities placed a complete ban on smuggling of all goods by truck drivers crossing the border.

A Chinese resident in Pyongyang who has recently visited China claimed that "except for the central districts in Pyongyang, power is supplied only for two or three hours a day, yet the worst problem is that water supply is suspended as well due to the deteriorating energy conditions."

"Even if electricity is not supplied, people can cope with many problems using sunlight [solar power], but there is not much they can do to solve the shortage of water for drinking, toilets, and other daily uses. All family members have to focus on resolving the water shortage," the source added.

The North Korean government's wire service, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), reported on November 4, 2016: "The ferries sail between Kim Il Sung Square and the Tower of the Juche Idea, guaranteeing that citizens can travel during the rush hour. . . . These solar powered-ferries provide ferry services both to workers and for guests from home and abroad in the form of tourist and chartered services."

According to Yun Hyok, the captain of Okryu 1, "the ferry is powered by the energy of sun light . . . the driving system was created with the energy and skill of our engineers. The ship can run for around 8 hours when fully charged."

This plan was discovered through internal materials on display at the Natural Energy Research Centre, formed in November 2014 as a result of an order issued by Kim Jong Un to develop energy resources that do not

pollute the environment.

An overseas visitor to the Natural Energy Research Centre said that "the Centre in Pyongyang has a diagram of the 30-year plan to develop renewable energy with the title "The dream and ideal of Natural Energy Science development". . . . The materials there also indicate plans to train specialists in the science of "natural energy" development, and plans related to the development and trial sites for wind power, geothermal energy, and solar thermal energy."

Such plans mean that North Korea plans to develop renewable energy, in addition to building hydroelectric power plants and/or using Chinese/Russian power to deal with energy shortages. In other words, they intend to attempt to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels and develop renewable energy. Since Kim Jong Un's rise to power, a variety of measures have been put in place and investments made to broaden the use of renewable energy.

North Korea is racing to boost its electricity supply by up to 50 percent with the completion of several generating stations by the end of the year and is pushing alternative resources like solar -- already used extensively in the countryside -- to ease its chronic shortages, a government expert told the Associated Press in Pyongyang.

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