

“HOTEL OF DOOM” GETS A MAKEOVER - AT WHAT COST?



North Korea is once again trying to convince the world that it is a powerful country. The cursed ‘Hotel of Doom’ in Pyongyang is getting a makeover. A major one! \$2 billion, about 10% of GDP is being invested in the project.

For decades, North Korea has been fighting to retain the image of a prosperous and happy country. Not many believe that to be true. Especially now, when the praised leader, Kim Chong Il, appears to be suffering from ill health. However, the reputation has to be protected at all costs. North Korea has found a project which is to prove the glamour and power once again. **A massive reconstruction is to turn one of the most controversial and unappealing buildings in the world into a modern, state-of-the-art hotel.**

The construction of the Ryugyong Hotel started already in 1987. At that time, it was a very ambitious project, which - if completed - would have presented the world with one of the tallest buildings of the time. Nevertheless, the early nineties brought about the fall of the Soviet Union and thus, the main funding source vanished. The building had to be put on hold. The nearly complete structure was so unattractive that **many official photographs were airbrushed to erase the building off the city skyline.**

After sixteen years of waiting, the project has now been revived. The renovation started in 2008 and the makeover is bound to be a fancy one. The front of the building is already being covered by reflective glass windows, which quite successfully conceal the dull concrete mass underneath. New flashy rings of shiny steel have been added to encircle the 330-metre building and more mirrored glass is to be added to the façade as well.

Once finished, the hotel will feature 3000 rooms, five restaurants, a casino, nightclub and many other tourist ‘traps’. Sadly, North Korean foreign policy is not overly warm and inviting to any visitors. Who knows, perhaps by 2012, when the renovation is supposed to be finished, the country’s attitude will change and the Hotel Ryugyong will no longer be known as the Hotel of Doom.

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