

Nearly 60 bridges, 2,000 houses wrecked by typhoon in North Korea

September 9 2020



Members of a 12,000-strong volunteer workforce attend a rally to pledge support for a typhoon recovery campaign ordered by North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un at the Kumsusan palace in Pyongyang

A typhoon that struck North Korea wrecked nearly 60 bridges and destroyed or inundated more than 2,000 houses, state media reported

Wednesday, with leader Kim Jong Un saying the damage had disrupted central planning for the rest of the year.

Typhoon Maysak brought days of heavy downpours to the country's east coast last week even as the North was still reeling from earlier flooding and typhoon damage, and this week it was followed by Typhoon Haishen.

Maysak "destroyed or inundated" more than 2,000 houses and tens of [public buildings](#) in the affected regions, the official KCNA news agency said, while 60 kilometres of roads and 59 bridges collapsed, with over 3,500 metres of railway roadbeds "swept away".

Natural disasters tend to have a greater impact in the North due to its creaking infrastructure, and the country is vulnerable to flooding as many mountains and hills have long been deforested.

The damage obliged the authorities to "change the direction of our struggle after comprehensively considering the year-end tasks that were underway", Kim told a top committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, according to KCNA.

It did not give specific details.

Pyongyang march

Kim has ordered some 12,000 Pyongyang-based party members to help with recovery efforts in affected rural regions, and they attended a rally on Tuesday before being dispatched.



People bow as they pay their respects before the statues of late North Korean leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as the country marks the 72nd anniversary of its founding on September 9

"We are afraid of nothing," said Kang Chol Jin, a party member at the event in front of the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, the giant mausoleum that holds the bodies of Kim's grandfather and father, the North's founder Kim Il Sung and his son and successor Kim Jong Il.

"We firmly confirm our determination to go to the typhoon-afflicted areas and complete our missions as soon as possible," Kang added.

Residents cheered and waved flowers as the rally participants marched in uniform through the streets of the capital.

Kim stressed the importance of completing the recovery efforts before next month's commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Workers' Party founding on October 10.

Authorities have previously promised to open the Pyongyang General Hospital, currently under construction, on that date, and according to reports preparations are underway for a possible military parade.

It was not clear whether the "change" Kim mentioned was a reference to either of those.

While localised, the [typhoon](#) damage is testing the North's state capacity and resources, said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"The political risk to Kim of failing to deliver promised reconstruction may be limited, but an accumulation of economic failures will strain his regime."

The impoverished country is subject to multiple UN Security Council sanctions over its banned weapons programmes.

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