

Impact Players

Li Jinjun

By Andy Lim

Who is he?

Li Jinjun is the new People's Republic of China (PRC) ambassador to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Mr. Li was previously the vice-minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, a position he assumed in March 2007. Prior to that, he served as the PRC ambassador to the Philippines from December 2005 to March 2007, and as the PRC ambassador to Myanmar from January 2001 to December 2005. He has also served as vice president, secretary general and as executive vice president of the Chinese Association for International Understanding since December 2010. He first joined the International Department in September 1975, and has worked in various positions there, including as deputy division director (October 1984 – June 1987), division director (August 1991 – September 1993), deputy director-general and Director-General of the China Economic Cooperation Centre (October 1994 to July 1997), Director-General of the General Office (July 1997 – July 1999), and Director-General of the Bureau of West European Affairs (July 1999 – January 2001). He worked on his training secondment in Huantai County, Shandong Province, where he was deputy secretary of the county committee of the CPC. Mr. Li has been a member of the CPC since June 1984. He studied at the Shanghai International Studies University from 1972 to 1974 and studied abroad at Heidelberg University in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1974 to 1976.

Why has he been in the news?

President Xi Jinping officially appointed Li as the 17th ambassador to the DPRK on March 18 in an announcement made by a Standing Committee of the National People's Congress press release. In accepting his new assignment, Li said that he will "actively blaze a new trail" in PRC-DPRK relations and maintain the "unswerving policy" of developing the traditional friendship between the two allies, calling it a "glorious mission" in a statement posted by the Chinese embassy in Pyongyang on March 20.

What can we expect from him?

The new ambassador will face a daunting task of repairing strained relations between the PRC and DPRK. Since Kim Jong-un took power in 2012, the once vaunted "lips and teeth" relations between the two countries came under duress, with various reports that Beijing has not been pleased with Pyongyang's actions. When the DPRK conducted its third nuclear test in February 2013, it came despite protests by the Chinese government not to do so. It is also telling that since Kim Jong-un succeeded his father in 2012, he has not been invited to visit China nor met with Chinese president Xi Jinping, who has already met South Korean president Park Geun-hye a few times, including a state visit to Seoul in July 2014. However, reports emerged recently that Kim Jong-un and Xi Jinping might meet in May during their attendance of the commemoration events in Moscow marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. There is no doubt Ambassador Li has a lot on his plate, with the top priority being the unenviable task of fixing an historic alliance, and maybe facilitating a much-awaited visit by Kim Jong-un to China.



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