

N. Korea faces historic turning point: State media

SEOUL • North Korea is facing a “significant, historic turning point”, its state media said yesterday, ahead of a highly anticipated second summit between its leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump.

The meeting between the two leaders - which follows their Singapore summit last June - is scheduled to be held in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi on Feb 27 and 28.

Attention has been focused on whether the American team will offer to lift some economic sanctions on North Korea, in return for the Pyongyang regime taking concrete steps towards denuclearisation.

“It is time for us to tighten our shoe strings and run fast, looking for a higher goal as we face this decisive moment,” the Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in an editorial.

“Our country is facing a significant, historic turning point,” it added, without explicitly referencing the summit.

Earlier this month, Mr Trump tweeted that North Korea will become a “great economic powerhouse” under Mr Kim. “He may surprise some but he won’t surprise me, because I have gotten to know him and fully understand how capable he is,” said Mr Trump.

The Rodong Sinmun commentary also called on North Koreans to make greater efforts to boost the country’s economy.

North Korea is rising as a “strong, socialist nation”, and one’s true act of patriotism begins at one’s workplace, it said. “Each and every product should be made to make our country shine.”

North Korea, which holds most of the peninsula’s mineral resources, was once wealthier than the South, but decades of mismanagement and the demise of its former paymaster the Soviet Union have left it deeply impoverished.

In 2017, the United Nations Security Council banned the North’s main exports -

coal and other mineral resources, fisheries and textile products - to cut off its access to hard currency in response to Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

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