Beat: Politics

N. Korea admits leader Kim Jong Un suffers health problems

-, 26.09.2014, 20:39 Time

USPA News - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who has not been seen in public for more than three weeks, is suffering from "discomfort," state television reported Friday in the first acknowledgement of ill health. It is believed he may be suffering from gout.

The confirmation came in a pre-recorded hour-long documentary which aired on Korean Central Television (KCTV) on Friday. It said Kim continued to work hard with enthusiasm, despite the health problems, and added that his work served as an inspiration to North Korean citizens and service members alike. No details were provided. South Korea`s Yonhap news agency, citing an unidentified source familiar with North Korean affairs, reported that Kim was suffering from gout, which runs in Kim`s family. The leader also suffers from hyperuricemia, hyperlipidemia, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, the source claimed. Aidan Foster-Carter, a honorary senior research fellow in Sociology and Modern Korea at Leeds University in England, said he does not think Kim`s situation is anything serious. "We`re all guessing on this one, but I think gout is the best bet," he said. "Nasty, but not serious. Guy should lose weight, eat better and exercise more." Kim made his most recent public appearance on September 3 along with his wife, Ri Sol-ju. He was notably absent on Thursday when North Korea convened the second session of the 13th Supreme People`s Assembly (SPA), fueling speculation about possible health problems. He was also seen walking with a limp in July and August. Kim Jong-un was promoted to Supreme Leader in December 2011 to lead the impoverished and secretive country. It came days after his father, Kim Jong-il, died on December 17, 2011, after suffering an "advanced, acute myocardial infarction, complicated with a heart shock," while on a train for a "field guidance tour." Analysts have disputed the official version. Little is known about Kim Jong-un, who was educated in Switzerland and is believed to be in his late 20s, making him the youngest head of state in the world. He reportedly resembles his father the most and had always been his father`s favorite among his brothers, but the sudden death of Kim Jong-il left the North Korean government with little time to prepare him.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2739/n-korea-admits-leader-kim-jong-un-suffers-health-problems.html

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619