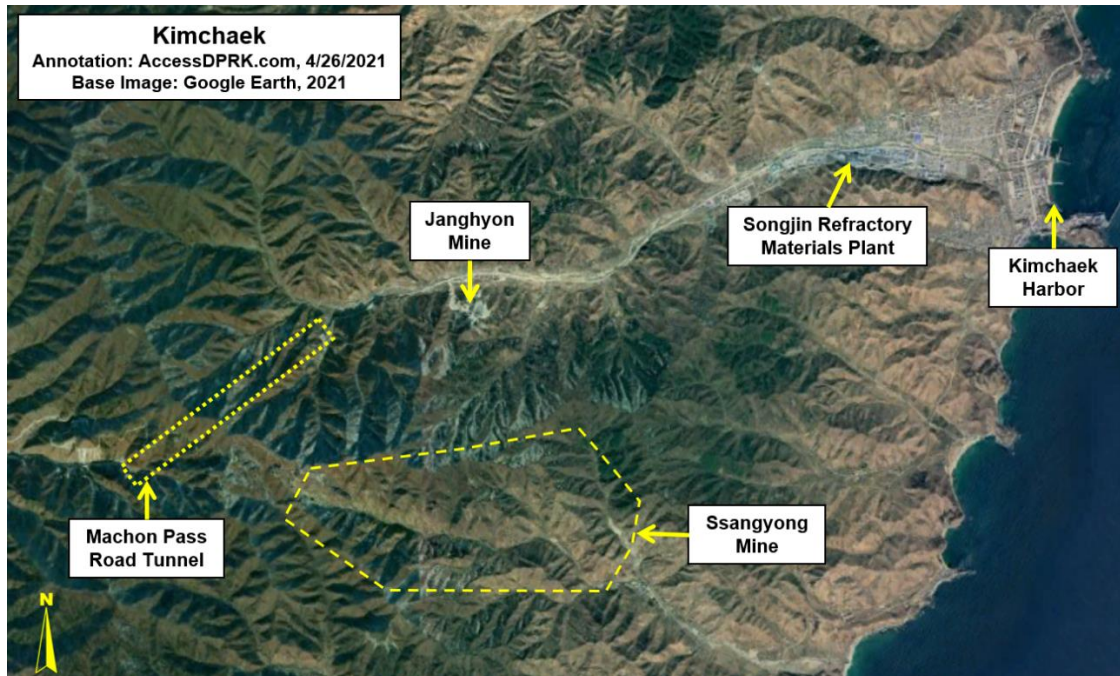


AccessDPRK analysis provided exclusively* for a [Patreon](#) supporter by Jacob Bogle, April 2021.



Kimchaek is the southernmost county within N. Hamhung Province and has a 2021 estimated population of 236,380.

The city was named after the North Korean general [Kim Cheak](#) in 1951. Curiously, he was actually purged from the party after it was revealed that he was partially responsible for the failure of defending Inchon during the US-led landing. His death on Jan. 31, 1951 is considered to have been an assassination by some. Regardless, numerous places are named after him including the Kim Chaek Iron and Steel Works, located north of Kimchaek County, within the bounds of Chongjin.

Prior to 1899, the site was just a small fishing village. The Japanese turned it into a port city named *Shirotsu*. From there, the city grew in size, but it was still a relatively small port; albeit modernized.

Kimchaek was briefly occupied by UN forces during the Korean War, but by the winter of 1950/51 the city and all of the northern portions of Korea were in the hands of North Korean and Chinese forces.

After the war, the whole area underwent reconstruction, modernization, and growth (with foreign financial and technical assistance).

Today, Kimchaek's economy is a mix of industry, mining, and fishing (both boat production and fishing itself). There is the Songjin Refractory Materials Plant which produces the materials used in furnaces and other high-temperature environments, the Songjin Iron Works, and there are multiple small facilities along the coast that are dedicated to manufacturing and repairing fishing boats.

The primary product of the refractory materials plant is magnesia clinker, with an annual output of 300,000 tonnes. This is used in many fireproofing items. Based on information from the [Ministry of](#)

[Unification](#), a possible source mine for the raw material comes from the nearby Janghyon (Geumya) Mine, as it is known to extract numerous mineral types.

One other important mine is the Ssangyong Mine. Located in the south of the county at 40.620844° 129.133684°, the mine extracts apatite which is a phosphate-bearing mineral group. This material is then processed and used in the production of fertilizer. Back in 1988 (the last available date) it produced 500,000 tonnes annually, but current satellite imagery suggests the mine is working at only a fraction of its earlier capacity. However, it is still in operation.

Kimchaek has approximately 900 meters of public beaches along with a nearby health center/spa that is in the shape of a hexagon. There is only one known marketplace but that occupies 10,600 sq. m. and has expanded since it was moved to its current location in 2012.

Few new houses have been built; however, this neighborhood (40.657542° 129.194570°) was rebuilt in 2012. Quietly accepting the existence of slums and sections of very old housing is normal within North Korea, but every so often the houses are either modernized or the neighborhood is completely torn down and new types of housing constructed in its place.



While detailed information is sparse, county seats tend to have several higher education institutions. Kimchaek likely has a maritime university and may have small medical, economic, agricultural, and light industry universities.

The section of Kimchaek along the beachfront has multiple shops, a hotel, and other public buildings. On the waterfront, Taehung Fishing Industries (40.671964° 129.201126°) used to be connected to the main shipyard (immediately south) by rail. This remnant can be seen as a thin footbridge over the river today. The railway then went along the harbor and was connected to the primary rail line at this point 40.662242° 129.201495°. When the spur line going to Taehung was removed, I don't know.

Militarily, Kimchaek is generally well defended due to its proximity to Chongjin. But the town is also defended by its own surface-to-air missile battery (40.740163° 129.203101°). As well, there is a small naval reserve facility in the harbor (40.662681° 129.203614°) that has 12 patrol craft at the time of this

report. Kimchaek also has five air defense artillery batteries and there are two hardened artillery sites to the south.



There's an unidentified communication facility at 40.684973° 129.202829° that is made up of two very large towers. They are likely mediumwave transmitters with an unknown purpose.

One interesting discovery is that right across the county border at 40.690619° 129.205415° two covered artillery positions were constructed in 2019. These now join around 200 others along both coasts and the DMZ and are among the newest coastal defenses built.

***Free online access has been granted by the patron. This city brief has been edited for tone, context, and added references when needed.**

--Jacob Bogle, April 2021 (edited May 2023)

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