



GOODFRIENDS



Weekly Newsletter

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["Good Friends" desires to help the North Korean people through humanistic point of view, and publishes "North Korea Today" describing the way the North Korean people live as real as possible. We at Good Friends also hope to be a bridge between the North Korean people and the world.]

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[Hot Topics]

Women Not Wearing Skirts under Control with Regulation during 150-Day Battle

Even during the 150-day battle period, inspections on the women’s clothing are being conducted everywhere. North Korean authorities are forcing women to wear skirts, to such an extent that women not wearing skirts are banned to enter the markets. Women appeal that skirts are so inconvenient at work during the full-blown mobilization period. Naturally most women prefer wearing pants to skirts because pants allow more freedom in movement. In response, authorities organized disciplinary teams with Youth Union, Democratic Women’s Union and Students to inspect women’s clothing. Any woman without wearing skirt will be placed in forced labor, and consequently women have to wear skirts when they go out. Women in City of *Nampo*, South *Pyongan* Province, complain in unison, “All the streets are covered with disciplinary teams. No women, not only peddlers but also those going for shopping at the markets, are allowed into the market if they are not wearing skirts. Wouldn’t it be better to wear the most convenient clothes in order to raise productivity during the 150-day battle period? Why do they insist women wearing skirts which most women consider inconvenient?”

Women Wear Skirts on Top of Pants to Evade Inspection

Forced to wear skirts, women with no skirts have to borrow them whenever they go out. Some women put pants on and wear skirts similar to a large sack on top of it. On June 12th, *Lee, Ok-hwa* (30s) in *Nampo* City, South *Pyongan* Province, told us the following episode. “It was my turn to sweep the street for a week then. I went out to the street at five in the morning with a sweeper. I found five *Kkotjebi*’s with dirty clothes on digging up in the trash bins. On the other side of the street, a male member of a disciplinary team was inspecting

everyone carrying luggage on bicycles. A little later, another member of the disciplinary team started inspecting women's clothing. One of the members shouted at a woman who seems to have come from rural area to peddle vegetable, 'Why are you wearing pants?' As soon as the women heard the shout, they touched their waists and let their rolled up skirts down, and their pants disappeared. The male member of the disciplinary team instantly seemed amazed. He then motioned the women to move on. After the women moved a few steps, they exploded in laughter. The sight of women laughing was so sweet. At the same time, I heard a complaint from behind me, 'I thought I could earn a pack of cigarette. I am out of luck from the dawn.' "

Skirts with Flowery Patterns – Targets of Ideology Strife

Even with skirts, some women are not fine. Especially some young women who are anxious to display their beauty want to wear miniskirts and skirts with rather colorful flowery patterns. The problem is that those skirts are now the targets for control and ideology strife. Skirts fit in ethos of Korean people, and are elegant and beautiful. And that is the reason why pants worn by women are not allowed. However, miniskirts and skirts with flowery patterns are considered for women with "rotten ideology." Especially, those pants, such as tight pants or bell-bottomed trousers (**짱대 바지(졸바지)나 나팔바지**) are not in Korean fashion, but in a vulgar capitalistic fashion, and therefore they should be rejected. *Han, Myung-joo* (pseudonym, 20s), a student at a medical college in *Sinuiju*, North *Pyongan* Province, had to pay a fine after a clothing inspection. She complained with a criticism, "Everything in this country is under control, from the top of head to the bottom of feet. Hair shouldn't be long. Hair shouldn't be loosened. Permanent wave shouldn't be done on hair. Wouldn't freedom and beauty be the most desired for women at my age? No matter what control may be carried out, young women will try to evade the control and do how they would like to do at any cost. This reality should not be ignored and neglected." *Suh, Hwa-yung* (pseudonym, 20s), student at the same college with Ms. Han, added, "Wouldn't it be nice to follow the customs of other countries if they are good? Why do we insist that only ours are the best? Everyone has his or her own way of seeing or enjoying things. I wish they didn't care about what women wear, miniskirts or tight pants (**짱대 바지**). If young people were lectured on not 'to follow fad,' they will find their way to do it. That is why the control does not have any effect."

[Food]

The *Gaechun* United Mining Enterprise Suspended Food Rations Starting Late Last May

The *Gaechun* United Mining Enterprise, in *South Pyongan* Province, has suspended food rations since late last May. Additionally mines No.2 and No.3 have been out of operation since June 7. Authorities at the Enterprise are using police to force miners to return to work, as attendance has decreased, even though they are in the middle of the 150-day battle. The Deputy General Manager, in an address to the miners, appealed to the miners to "overcome the food crisis until the end of June." The Primary Party Secretary and public

relations workers tried to motivate the workers with a catchphrase reading, "Let's overcome the food crisis through revitalization." Because the miners' wives are unable to find goods to peddle in the market, they have turned to raising pigs and chickens, but they report it is not doing much to improve their living conditions. Having previously depended on food rations from the Mining Enterprise, people are no longer even able to afford porridge. As a result, many miners come to work without having eaten breakfast.

[Economy]

Increase in Land Area through the Land Management Project Reaps No Impact on Production

According to the Bureau of Estates and Farm Land Management (농촌 경영 위원회 토지관리부), more than nine years have passed since the launching of the Land Management Project (토지정리사업). However, this has not led to an increase in crop production running contrary to expectations that increased farm lands would lead to higher production. "Only land area has increased, but there were no developments made to improving the quality of the land", one official stated. There are instances of where newly cultivated farms and fields are experiencing water shortages. Rice paddies are being planted, however, due to poor access to water crop yields are suffering. On the other hand, some farmers claim that the poor crop yields cannot be solely attributed to land quality asserting that an increase in land will undoubtedly result in increased yields. Other farmers believe that this problem arises from the inadequate distribution of topsoil. One farmer commented, "During the land organization, the topsoil was deposited in a single area rather than being spread evenly as it should have been, because it was considered to be too cumbersome at the time. One cannot expect high production from land that lacks nutrients. In order to create arable land, we need to fertilize the soil, but this is prohibited." Nevertheless, private farms are doing well, "Private farmers spread the topsoil and use fertilizers at whatever cost so it's only natural for them to yield higher production," he added.

Production Shrank by 20% at the *Gilju* Pulp Factory

Production at the *Gilju* Pulp factory in *Hamgyong* Province shrunk by 20%, attributed primarily to the shortage of raw materials, but also due to under compensated workers. Deprived of food rations for several years, many factory workers have resorted to stealing paper from the factory, which can be sold at 2,200 NK won per kilo. Despite factory inspections and security closely monitoring the workers, good quantities of paper have already been stolen, resulting in a seeming decrease in production. Approximately, 300-350 kg of paper is stolen every day. Last year, two kg of paper was worth 2 kg of whole corn. Despite tighter inspections and an increase in overall production, the reduction in supply has caused the price of paper to rise this year. Workers who are caught stealing are punished with no pay for one month and are mandated to do extra work in the factory after completing their regular 8-hour shift. In addition to these punishments, they would be

reprimanded and humiliated in front of their colleagues. Factory workers complain, however, that higher executives steal much more paper than the workers.

Electricity Generation Dropped by 40% at the *Dae-Ryeng-Gang* No. 2 Power plant in *Taechun* County

Electricity generation at the *Dae-Ryeng-Gang* No.2 power plant in *Taechun* County in North *Pyongan* Province was reported to have fallen by more than 40% below last year's levels. A four month research conducted by the facility on the levels of generation beginning in October 2008 showed output to have decreased sharply. One official stated, "Due to the continuous malfunction of the first turbine, we spend more time repairing than operating the machines. Nevertheless, those who work there, including the manager and the technicians, hunker down rather than try to repair the malfunctions. Everyone fears being blamed for failing to fix it, which is likely given the lack of adequate parts and skills." Despite the sharp decrease, the plant capacity is too small to affect the overall supply of electricity for the people in North *Pyongan* Province.

[Politics]

Assessing the Unemployed and Unaffiliated Residents

The authorities initiated an investigation as there were unverified residents among the members of the workshop union during the 150-day battle. Although the list of the participants among the members of the party, Youth Union, and Democratic Women's Union is 100% verifiable, a substantial number of residents in each county are unemployed or do not belong to the union. One officer estimated that there are at least 100 unemployed and unaffiliated residents in each county, although there may be variations in each region. Accordingly, the North Korean authorities mobilized the Neighborhood Units to thoroughly verify the members of the workshop once again and to correctly assess the list of unemployed and unaffiliated people and their actual conditions.

The 100-Day Battle Will Start After the 150-Day Battle

On June 8th, the managerial officials from the Central Party and the cabinet gathered and held a meeting with the theme "To build a Strong and Prosperous Nation." A decision was made in this meeting that the 100-day battle will start after the end of the 150-day battle. On the following day, the leading secretaries and the chairmen of the People's Committee of the City and Provincial Parties received the first notice via telephone and afterwards, an official document of the above announcement was released.

The Party Members Are Busy with Secret Documents and Writing a Self-Criticism

The Party Central Committee released a "policy to strictly protect state secrets" to every member of the party. This policy was focused on the leading officials of the government and the military, and originates from the desire to root out all misconduct by 2012. The committee emphasized "not to disseminate a state secret, no matter how small it is" and announced that a stronger investigative committee than the Anti-Socialist Conscience Investigation will be established in order to control information. All official information except that which is reported in the mainstream mass media such as *Rodong Shinmun*

newspaper, is considered a state secret. However, some secret documents, mostly about events of national interest such as the U.S. espionage case, are published.

In addition, the Party Central Committee delivered a bulletin to every member of the party that stated, "Our country does not require payment of taxes, but there are occasions when some people use their power and political influence to burden the people with non-tax payments under various pretexts. The workers must maintain sound judgment, and the judicial officers must not take advantage of the situation by accepting bribes. The workers and the officials must oppose instances where they do not work for the people but for the private interest of an individual." Accordingly, the members of the Party are writing a self-criticism in which they have to report their own misconduct while performing their duties. Also, the ideological basis will be scrutinized through self-criticism by writing an essay titled, "What are we supposed to do as members of the Party?"

"Thought there will be no burden other than tax"

"How to promote a project to touch up the village houses to become a military-first exemplary family by the end of September" was discussed at the meeting of heads of the Neighborhood Units in *Pyongsung*, South *Pyongan* Province. With help from the Democratic Women's Union, ideology education will continue so that all households can participate. If any family cannot meet expectations, they will be expelled from the area, according to the new policy. Therefore, each house needs to carry an extra burden of 20 sheets of leather, two pairs of gloves to support railroad, two clubs, 200 grams of wild edible greens, one kilogram of meat for the People's Army, 200 kilograms of power fertilizer, five kilograms of scrap iron, a bucket of gravel to pave a road, a five NK Won bill for procuring idle materials and two gunny sacks to support farms on top of the existing normal tax.

Citizens of *Pyongsung* said, "On the broadcast, the extra burden now being imposed, excluding taxes, is a violation of people's financial health. We will get rid of it, and they still ask so much." Residents no longer believe what the government says.

[Society]

Scuffles increase as Market Control Strengthens

In *Hamhung*, South *Hamheng* Province, market control has strengthened so that no one can sell goods other than farm products at the market. Some merchants are still trying to change their products while other merchants who could not change their goods are still secretly doing business around the market. There are approximately 200 merchants who sell prohibited goods such as manufactured goods and second hand clothing. The patrol at the markets has at least doubled with the intention of stopping the disorder as the inside and outside of the market is very crowded with lots of people. The female merchants and patrol party have recently been clashing, getting into arguments and even physical fights as market control has increased.

On the afternoon on June 13th, people witnessed patrol party members dragging a group of women who were selling clothes to a vacant lot. According to witnesses, "The patrol party dragged them like animals and threw them down." However, the women did not want to lose their bundles of clothes and tried to fight back which resulted in a physical brawl. *Seo*

Chuen-Sil (alias, 40's) who was at the scene said, "Those women who fought back were mad with anger. They even started to scratch and bite and ripped the military uniforms of the patrol officers. The patrol officers who were supposed to reinforce control ended up looking shabby and were humiliated by people." *Lee Yong-Ok* (alias, 40's) said "Business is slow so everyone is worried about the bleak future as it is. Then the patrol officers come and disturb us so when they beat the citizens like dogs, of course people will be enraged. If it was me, I would have bitten off their arm and never let go even if my teeth broke off," expressing displeasure about the harsh action by the patrol party.

Gangs Sent to the Shock Troop Brigade to be Disciplined

In Suncheon city, South *Pyongan* Province, citizens older than 17 years old from the Youth Union without a job and in a gang are being sent to the shock troop brigade to be disciplined.

25 young men who were caught from June 1st to 7th and the 26 men caught between the 7th and 16th have been gathered as a unit of the shock troop brigade. Since this movement has started, the number of young men and gang members placed into the shock troop brigade has reached about 200. These units will undertake the more physically difficult labor during the 150-day battle. Some wealthier families are paying hundred thousands NK won or more and using monetary bribes to take their child out of the shock troop brigade.

The First Question Women ask at a Blind Date, "The goat went to the mountain? And the baby stroller is strong? "

It becomes a trend that single ladies ask questions to dates when they meet for the first time. "The goat went to the mountain? Is the baby stroller strong?" The goat refers to father-in-law, who smokes. 'The goat went to the mountain' means father-in-law passed away. 'Baby stroller' refers to mother-in-law and the question 'Is the baby stroller strong?' means whether or not mother-in-law is healthy enough to work. In other words, young ladies want father-in-law to have passed away and mother-in-law to be healthy enough to look after kids or do business together. In these days, the age restriction on doing business makes them even work with any old ladies in the neighborhood. In this situation, mother-in-law who can work is regarded as an important person.

Elderlies Abused by Their Children

Some mother-in-laws are respected since they become very useful person. On the other hand, others are disrespected by their children because of poor financial situation. And the number of the last becomes increasing. *Kim, Kyung-Hwa* (40s) in *Gangseo* District, South *Pyongan* Province told us the story that happened in a neighborhood unit. "I saw unbelievable cases. An old lady in my neighbor got beaten by her son and bite by her daughter-in-law. The old lady got mad at her son and daughter-in-law so that she sold house-ware out to buy alcohol. This sort of case is very common. There is another example. *Jae-Dong's* (pseudonym) family lived with grandfather whose wife already passed away. Because of loneliness, he seemed cranky very often that led more arguments and fight between him and his son. When a friend of their family's needed 300,000 NK won

desperately, *Jae-Dong's* family gave the friend money in exchange of looking after *Jae-Don's* father. It is the case that the family threw grandfather out. There was another old lady whose son took away her money and then kicked out on the street. After her daughter-in-law lost money in her business, daughter-in-law asked her to sell her house and give money to her. Daughter-in-law even promised her to take care of her. Once she offered her money to her daughter-in-law, she was not treated well and kicked out on the street. She ends up begging for money here and there nowadays.”

[Women/Children/Education]

Teaching Staff Punished after Taking Bribe in Student Selection for Performance in *Pyongyang*

North *Hamgyong* Province Art Institute in *Chungjin* City, North *Hamgyong* Province went through an audit and inspection because of bribery allegations. On June 13th, the school authorities rendered punishment for the teaching staff implicated in the bribery by demoting them to middle school teaching staff. The school selected 42 among the 3rd year students for the performance in *Pyongyang*. In this process some of the parents who are wealthy or high ranking official bribed teachers to get their children into the performance group. However, problems occurred when several students selected were too poor at playing the musical instruments to perform. The teaching staff tried to offer private lessons to these students. However, it was not easy to make them improve their skill in a short period of time. The officials in the school held a meeting to better understand what's going on. They realized that they could lose face with this performance group in *Pyongyang* and they would be asked to take the responsibility for the misplay. The officials decided to punish the teaching staff and re-select the performance members. However, the parents of the students who weren't selected were angry with the involved staffs. So the re-selecting process had to go through obstacles. The principal and vice-principal in Art Institute directed the bribed teaching staff to visit the angry parents and to offer an apology to them. They were barely able to reselect performance members and started practicing for the play in *Pyongyang*.

[Accidents]

Company President Arrested for Doing Drug Business with Company Money

The president of *Ulrim* Company of 116 troop maneuver in *Chungjin* City of North *Hamgyong* Province was arrested immediately because it was revealed that he misappropriated company money for some years. As a result of investigation, it was uncovered that he has not only misappropriated company funds but also deeply involved in drug dealing. Needless to say about drug dealing with company money, he also used company vehicle that goes to and from *Hamheung* for transporting the drugs. It was reported that the monetary figure he earned this way reached fiver hundred million NK won. Hearing the news, the residents said that it is the biggest mega case in North *Hamgyong* Province.

[Commentary]

Not Allowing Women to Wear Pants is Gender Discrimination

North Korean authorities have begun to tighten restrictions on women's clothing during the 150-day battle. Women are now required to wear skirts when they visit markets for shopping or peddling. If they are caught in a market without a skirt, they risk facing significant fines or even time in a forced labor camp. Women complain that the new skirt requirements make little sense when pants are far more practical and allow for greater productivity during the 150-day. This rule is believed to have come into effect in February of 1986, when Kim Il Sung noticed that many women were wearing fatigue pants for "Friday Labor". Upon seeing this, he remarked, "For 'Friday Labor', women should carry pants in their bags and wear clean skirts on the streets. It does not look good for women to wear pants on the streets of Pyongyang." From that point on, inspections of women's clothing commenced.

The legal basis for dress code enforcement is unclear and the law only applies to women. A male inspector noted, "Dress code enforcement is extremely easy and not at all onerous. You may not make much money doing it, but it is fun to tease women and you have an easy excuse to start conversations with women. As a result, many young men volunteer to serve on disciplinary teams." It should come as no surprise that many of the male inspectors often behave rudely and can be quite harsh. While many women may look more attractive in skirts than they do in pants, this form of sexist discrimination is often extremely inconvenient and ill-suited for their daily routines. It is interesting that it is middle class workers that are most strict about the enforcement of this policy, often fostering an environment where the wearing of pants is considered a great evil.

When the economy is stable and the nation is able to sufficiently feed its population, greater attention is paid to these superficial regulations regarding appearance, but even now, when many women are forced to support their families without the assistance of government food rations, women are still facing strict regulations regarding their dress. As the North Korean government mobilizes these women for the 150-day battle, it is time they recognize the hardships these regulations place on women. While some of these women may wish to wear skirts, they are often an unjustifiable expense for citizens who must spend all day working in the fields or peddling in the markets. These restrictions should clearly be abolished. 🌸



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for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees



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Good Friends– An International NGO for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees

Good Friends provides relief works for international refugees to become all lives' friend, peace movement to fundamentally resolve disputes and conflicts that human beings face, and human rights movement to protect human rights

Good Friends has been providing information on food shortages in North Korea, raising funds for humanitarian assistance, dispatching activists to national border areas between China and DPRK and having them investigate local situations, and publishing reports on food shortages in North Korea.

Now Good Friends USA intends to improve humanitarian and human rights situation of North Korean residents and to inform this situation to the international community by

- 1) collecting information on severe food shortages and bad situations in health, education, and transportation and providing them to other humanitarian aids organizations so that they can support North Korean people effectively.
- 2) investigating current situations of North Korean refugees in China, and providing protections and aids for them.
- 3) assessing human rights violations occurring in North Korea, informing them to the international societies, and requesting the North Korean government for improvement on human rights and living conditions.

Also, Good Friends USA publishes the newsletter [North Korea Today \(English edition\)](#) to inform the international public.

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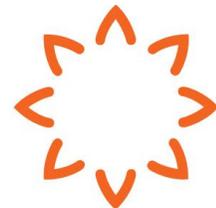
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