



**NORTH KOREA
TODAY**



GOOD FRIENDS



Weekly Newsletter

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["Good Friends" aims to help the North Korean people from a humanistic point of view and publishes "North Korea Today" describing the way the North Korean people live as accurately 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]

Miscellaneous Policies of Central Party during July

All the Ministries and Central organizations declared, "Our nation has not started any discussion on the issues concerning the heir to the nation's leader. Currently, our Dear Leader is in the prime of health, performs passionately the site counseling activities, is capable of handling the governmental affairs for the next ten years. Therefore it has been decided to halt any discussion on the issues concerning an heir to the nation's leader." Instructions came down that "Political provocations by the enemy have never been more severe, and it is too early now to have discussions on the issues concerning the heir to the nation's leader. No such discussion will be allowed. Do not be swayed by any false rumors. Keep silent to the questions on the issues concerning the heir to the nation's leader." Last July 12, there arrived the party policy "concerning strict control on the maintenance of confidential matters by party leaders and members." For instance, no instructions, speeches, party policies may be recorded on the computer or written down. Any violation will be subject to severe punishment. All official records should be approved. All handwritten notes should be submitted to the superior organization afterwards.

The Central Party praised the ministries concerned for a job well done for the first half of the year 2009, which is the year of North Korea-China Friendship, and encouraged them to continue to do so for the rest of the year. Subordinate organizations under Chamber 39th of Central Party were instructed to apply exchange tariffs to all items imported by all the other organizations except Chamber 39. Women are now allowed to wear pants during summer, with the restriction that only bright colors other than black and gray are permitted.

The Residents of the City of *Pyongyang* received through the neighborhood units the Party policy "concerning strict elimination of financial burden outside of the official tax on the part of the residents." However, as soon as the policy reaches the residents, residents of some districts received requests for 5,000 NK won from each family in the name of supporting a road pavement project. Any household unable to provide a laboring body

because of being elderly or disabled were required to make an additional payment of a minimum of 1,000 NK won to a maximum of 5,000 NK won. Naturally, residents have a lot of complaints, “As soon as the Party policy arrives, so does the scary burden outside of official tax.”

[Food]

Farmers of South *Hwanghae* Province Barely Survive on Green Corns

Farmers throughout the counties of *Ongjin*, *Ryonyon*, *Eunryool* and *Jangyon*, South *Hwanghae* Province barely survive each day on an ear or two of green corn as a meal due to food shortage. Even though August is the month of weeding battle, many farmers cannot fully participate in the mobilization after running out of food. Foremen of the work units and team leaders urged the farmers to show up for work, with a threat that if they do not make the required days of participation, they will not receive any from the end of the year recapitulation. Accordingly, the farmers reluctantly show up for work, but they are never willing to do anything, other than fulfilling the required days of participation. The farmers are not interested in weeding battle at all, but more interested in gathering unripe ears of young corn. Last August 3 in *Jaeryong* County, a group of farmers were arrested for stealing unripe ears of young corn by police during mobilization for weeding battle. Those twenty four arrested were sentenced to three days of hard labor.

Gypsum Mine in *Uiju* County Provides Food Ration by Selling Scrap Iron

Miners of the Gypsum Mine located in *Soojin Li*, *Uiju* County, North *Pyongan* Province barely survive on corn porridge. Since the mine has not been operating normally the last ten years, the miners are being assigned to other mobile units. As the food crisis of the miners continues to worsen, management of the mine has even sold some unusable mining equipment as scrap iron. With proceeds from the sale of scrap iron, they could provide the miners mobilized as laborers early August, especially those families that ran out of food with elderly members and young children, with 5 Kg of grain.

[Economy]

Drought, Crop Failures, Famine– Fearful Reminders of the Hardships during the 1990s

On August 17th, Party members of North *Hamgyong* Province held a plenary meeting among a large number of high ranking officials, including secretaries of the provincial, city, and county parties as well as the Chairmen of the Farm Management and Administrative Commission. Among several issues that were discussed, the primary concern was the month-long drought which began in mid July. As a result of the drought, corn and other crops have dried up and have failed to ripen. Harvests, especially of corn, were reported to have declined sharply due to the recent drought. This situation is causing great concern and fear among government officials who are recalling the dire crisis brought on by a similar drought in the late 1990s. The attendees at the meeting concluded that their top priority would be to salvage the corn harvests, and they decided to focus their efforts to mobilize all available workers to irrigate the corn farms.

Heightened Market Inspections Bring Fines on “Bulky Baggage”

Effective August 2, inspections of businesses in *Kanggye City* in *Jagang Province* were widely implemented. Not only are the existing markets targeted for this thorough inspection, street peddlers are also subject to this heightened form of scrutiny. Less than 30kg of grain are allowed to be sold by an individual merchant on any given day in the market. The reserve army has been commissioned to carry out these extensive inspections. Due to the arbitrariness of the term “bulky baggage” each officer enforces a different measure to arrest and fine peddlers. Since many peddlers are inclined to carry all items that are marketable regardless of its size, they are more likely to be inspected and penalized with fines from a minimum of 5,000 NK won to a maximum of 10,000 NK won. Merchants are sometimes penalized for either selling more or even less than 30kg of grain, which is difficult to determine upon inspection. There is great criticism resonating from merchants with respect to these excessive controls. On August 11th of last year, a manager from the Propaganda Department in *Kanggye City* addressed the importance of reducing the size of baggage used by merchants in the market--“Let’s make *Kanggye City* an example by strictly observing marketing regulations and policies,” he proclaimed. The merchants’ responses were apathetic by comparison.

***Kumgang* and *Anbyun* Counties’ Production Capacity Fall Below Expectations at Power Plant**

Residents are discontent over the lower than expected electricity production from the two recently built hydroelectric power plants in *Anbyun* and *Kumgang* Counties in *Kangwon Province*. Electricity production is so low compared to the costs of building these two power plants. In addition, there were many small and large accidents including casualties during the construction of these plants. Many soldiers and construction workers have either lost their lives or have become disabled. Despite these casualties and contrary to common belief, the actual electric capacity is not even enough to supply the commercial sector much less sufficient for sustaining the energy needs of the residential community. One officer admitted to some possible causes for the low production rates, “Construction of the plants was carried out carelessly with regards to the blueprint and the use of crucial equipments that should have been imported, but were instead substituted by sub par imitations produced by us”. The residents could not conceal their disappointment towards the power plants some saying, “It’s a liability not only to the nation as a whole, but also to the individual.”

[Politics]

***Chungjin* City Security Department’s warning to citizens: “Do not cross the river”**

Beginning on August 5th, the *Chungjin* City Security Department in North *Hamgyong Province* is continuously delivering lectures in order to prevent defections to China and illegal border-crossing in light of summer food shortages. The warnings indicate that strict regulations will be enforced, regardless of intent; whether it is simply a temporary crossing of the river to find relatives in China and receive aid or illegal emigration to South Korea and

third-party countries. A man in his forties under the alias *Cho Myung-Hak* lives in *Soobok-dong* and had listened to the lectures and said that the contents were not surprising disclosing the following:

“They told us that in some instances, fickle residents or people with unsound ideologies betray the fatherland and flee to other countries or cross the river because of struggles to survive as a result of the exacerbated food predicament and troubled economy. Furthermore, some people engage in illegal drug trafficking, resulting in serious impairments to the construction of a strong and prosperous nation, igniting public unrest. We have to awaken to the truth so that we can ruthlessly fight, without any concessions, against the people who sell out the country for drug deals, illegal smuggling of goods, and personal interests. Meanwhile, we must also strengthen solidarity amongst the ranks by campaigning to ferret out criminals. From now on, people who cross the river, illegally cross borders or contact outsiders will be dealt with not through words, but by strict legal punishment mobilization of the masses to fight unlawful behavior.”

As the *Chungjin* City Security Department delivers its lectures, it also reinforces surveillance and control of the families of defectors by assigning undercover security agents to monitor them as well as individually investigating others nearby.

***Hamhung* City Officials Arrested Parents who Ordered Their Children to Manufacture and Sell Drugs**

July 21st, *Hamhung* City, South Hamgyong Province- A couple was immediately placed under arrest after being charged with instructing their middle school aged children to produce and sell drugs. The students, who attend sixth grade at *Hamhung Donghung* Middle School, had been manufacturing the illegal substances at home and selling them since February of 2007 under the direction of their parents. The investigation revealed that the family received an advance of six hundred dollars from a drug dealer to purchase the necessary supplies for production. The children had been both producing and selling drugs up until December of 2007 and the parents took over responsibility exclusively beginning in February of 2008. Distribution was originally limited to areas near *Hamhung*, but as the demand increased they expanded their operations. By November of last year, aided by misconduct on behalf of police officers of the *Hamhung* City Police Station, they had reached as far as the *Sinuiju* Trade Company in North *Pyongan* Province. They were caught in the following December by virtue of the Anti-Socialist Conscience Investigation of the Central Party, but received a relatively light sentence of seven years of re-education under house arrest after successfully bribing a high-ranking official. Despite being placed under house arrest, they continued drug trafficking with unlawful support by the police until their recent arrest. A peddler who had previous involvement in drug dealing in the past recognized the drug dealing father while aboard the *Sinuiju* commuter train and reported him to the Provincial National Security Agency, who caught him with two kilograms of drugs in hand at the time of the arrest at *Hamju* station.

The National Security Agency is expanding the investigation, due to the presumed involvement of high-ranking provincial police officials and commerce officers, since the accused was not only caught red-handed, but also in violation of his sentence to house

arrest. Four people from *Sinuiju* Trade Company, three people from the Security Ministry in *Hamhung* City, and one person each from the Provincial Party of South Hamgyong Province and the public prosecutors station in *Sungchunkang* area have been quickly apprehended thus far. The National Security Agency is acknowledging the severity of the fact that the arrest was made during the 150-Day Battle, and communicated instructions by telephone followed by a decree in writing that “a ruthless legal punishment is to be enforced on state workers who had participated in drug trafficking, abusing their power by doing favors to promote illegal activities.” As the pursuit for lawbreakers continues, the number of those implicated continues to increase.

[Society]

***Wonsan Cho Gun-sil* Teachers College Is ‘Secondhand Bicycle College’**

Approximately 70% of the peddlers in *Wonsan*, *Kangwon* Province who sell Japanese secondhand bicycles are the students from *Wonsan Cho Gun-sil* Teachers College. Usually, they are not the students who came straight to the university without going to the military but are discharged soldier-students. They came from the various cities and counties of *Kangwon* Province, and plunged into the bicycle selling in order to earn tuition. They receive Japanese secondhand bicycles, repair them with cheap Chinese parts and transfer them to the merchants from other regions. It is within bounds to say that all men in their late 20-30s who currently sell the goods on the market shelf space for secondhand bicycles in *Wonsan* City Emerging Market are the students from this college.

Only about 15 students attend the class for each subject, and the rest of the students go out to sell the bicycles. By receiving certain amounts of money every day from them, the instructors in charge tolerate the absence. They receive 1,000-1,500 NK won per student, and in this way, they earn approximately 25,000 NK won per day. One third of this money goes to the instructor on duty from the educational affairs department and the rest of it to the instructor in charge. This was reported to the City Party and even to the Provincial Party, but they have not taken any measures yet. The residents sarcastically comment that *Cho Gun-sil* Teachers College “does not produce teachers but merchants who sell secondhand Japanese bicycles at high price.” Moreover, they call *Cho Gun-sil* Teachers College as ‘Secondhand Bicycle College’.

University Student Bicycle Traders, Notorious for Overcharge and Aggressive Salesmanship

Cho Gun-sil Teachers’ College students’ apparent monopoly of Japan-made used bicycles in *Shinheung* Market, *Wonsan* City of *Kangwon* Province has often made troubles. They rip off inexperienced traders from other areas and force customers who have given up buying the item after bargaining over the price to purchase it. If the customers do not want to buy it, the students sometimes begin to argue, beat them, and even rob them of their money. Residents who witnessed this say that they are not sure whether the students try to make money for their tuition or just to bully people.” *Cheong Hye-Soon* (50’s) says, “They did not study, so they are ignorant. They seem to manage to attend school only to receive a degree. Given that young generations are corrupted like this, how could national leaders be

produced in this situation? I am worried when I think these students are going to be teachers.”

[Women/Children/Education]

No College Degree is Given without Paying 200,000 NK won for Field Trip Expenses at *Cho Gun-sil* Teachers' College

Last August, *Han Kyung-Sil* (alias, 50's) went on a business trip to Wonsan in *Kangwon* Province and met her niece whom she had not seen for a long time. Her niece was attending *Cho Gun-Sil* Teachers' College. During her conversation with her niece, *Han* discovered that the story of female college students selling their bodies to make money was not just someone else's story.

“I was very glad to see *Yoon-Hee* (alias, 20's), but the joy did not last long because she seemed troubled. We met in the afternoon, and after chatting about one thing after another, it was evening before we realized. I took her to a restaurant on a beach to have dinner. She asked me if I could buy her a drink. I was shocked a little but joked ‘You learned how to drink in the college?’ and ordered a drink. I sensed that something unexpected must have happened to her. Sure enough, after few drinks, she began to tell me her story.

After graduating from *Cho Gun-Sil* Teachers' College, the graduates are placed as teachers in middle schools throughout the country. Before becoming juniors, students are required participate in field trips to revolutionary sites in Mt. *Baekdu*, *Hoeryong*, *Wangjaesan* in *Onsung* County. Because no student wants to participate in the field trips, the Education Department of the Central Party decided to expel any student who does not participate in the field trips. Last year, the school expelled 45 students who did not participate in the field trips. Shocked by this event, every student participated in the field trips this year, whether they sold bicycles or rarely attended class. They had no choice since failure to participate in field trips would result in expulsion even if one had good grades.

According to *Yoon-Hee*, most students do not participate in the field trips, not because they do not want to, but because they cannot afford the costs related to the field trips, which is about 200,000 NK won for 12 days. *Yoon-Hee* was in a similar situation as others. Where could she get such money when her own family could barely survive? For children of traders or high officials, this expense does not pose a problem. However, children of poor laborers, like *Yoon-Hee*, could not afford such money. They were struggling just to have two meals a day. Yet, without any consideration of the students' financial situations, the school decided to deny graduation to students who did not participate in the field trips. *Yoon-Hee* said she felt so discouraged and sorry to her family who had worked so hard to give her a better education.

Then *Yoon-Hee's* roommate introduced her to a man in his 50's whom she had never seen before and still does not know his first or last name. She received 300,000 NK won for sleeping with him for two nights. With that money, she was able to participate in the field trips. By selling her body, she was finally going to receive her diploma. *Yoon-Hee* said she felt so bad toward her family who always encouraged her to overcome any hardships and difficulties and make them proud by succeeding. *Yoon-Hee* believed that many of the female students participated in the field trips in this way.

Yoon-Hee had vowed to make her parents proud by becoming successful, but she could not stop crying because she had ruined herself to get the diploma. I don't know what I said to her to console her. I took her to the entrance of her school where she asked me to keep the story a secret. I felt bad as I thought of my brother who was so happy when *Yoon-Hee* was admitted into college. I cannot forget the image of my niece as she smiled and said, 'But isn't it better than being expelled from the school.'

***Sariwon Heechun* Power Plant Station Labor Mobilization Wants Executive Members' Wives to Volunteer First**

On July 28th, the Leading Secretary of *Sariwon* in North *Hwanghae* Province declared, "*Sariwon* City's Democratic Women's Union (DWU) members must become an example for all DWU members in the country," and called for volunteers for the labor mobilization at the construction site of the power plant station. The city's DWU manager appealed to the gathered DWU members, "We must lead and contribute so that General *Kim Jong-Il* could see the production of electricity when we become a Strong and Powerful Nation in 2012." Despite such appeals by the executive members, there were no volunteers. On August 2nd, the City Party's propaganda secretary strongly urged DWU primary workers at the DWU committee and the district office to volunteer, but there were no volunteers. It seems that, despite the propaganda secretaries' pleas, no one is listening.

One war veteran went to the City Party's Petition Department and proposed, "If you want to mobilize the DWU members, you must first mobilize the wives of police officers, City Party executive members and the administrative committee members. Laborers cannot support their families unless their wives work at the market. Therefore, the laborer's wives cannot volunteer even if they wanted. However, aren't the wives of City Party executive members able to live on their husband's salaries? These women should volunteer first. Then the DWU members will follow without complaint." The City Party's Leading Secretary thought this was a very good idea and ordered it to be carried out. The executive members returned home and tried to persuade their wives to volunteer. However, the wives were strongly opposed to such idea. As such, there are still no volunteers for the labor mobilization. The executive members are in a precarious position since their wives are refusing to volunteer even though their husband's reputations are on the line.

[Accidents]

Accidental Fire Caused by *Kkotjebies* at *Sinsungchun* Train Station

On the night of August 2, an accidental fire broke out at the *Sinsungchun* train station located in South *Pyongan* Province. *Kkotjebies*, or homeless children, were starting a fire inside a warehouse behind the direction board building when the fire spread. About half of the direction board women's dormitory and a cafeteria were damaged by the fire. Angered by this event, police officers, security agents, patrol guards, and others began beating the *kkotjebies*. Unable to withstand the beating, the *kkotjebies* have started to leave the *Sin Sung Chun* train station. Since the fire, the number of *kkotjebies* around this area has been dwindling.

Gas Leak Accident at *Kaechun* Coalmine

On June 21st, around 4 p.m., a gas leak occurred at the *Kaechun* coalmine United Enterprise 1 Earth coalmine's third pit, second platoon located in South *Pyongan* Province. Two of the eight people exposed to the gas died. This is the biggest accident that has occurred during the 150-Day Battle, and the workers received harsh criticisms. On the day of the incident, some of the workers noticed that there was a gas leak, but the leader responded, "We must complete our task during the 150-Day Battle, yet because we are far from the public enterprise, the workers are coming up with excuses not to work," and continued the operation. However, the security officer, not the leader, was blamed for the accident. The officer complained, "I already reported this. If they had a clear emergency plan for gas leaks, this accident would not have occurred. Now that everything has turned out this way, they are pointing their fingers at me." ✨



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Good Friends: Center 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' friends, 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 aid for them.
- 3) assessing human rights violations occurring in North Korea, informing international communities, and requesting that the North Korean government act to improve 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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Good Friends USA

(DC) 734 15th Street N.W. Suite # 500B, Washington, DC 20005

(MD) 4605 Powder Mill Rd., Beltsville, MD 20705

Phone: 202-824-0788(DC); 301-455-9196(Cell)

FAX: 301-937-0748

E-mail: goodfriends_usa@yahoo.com

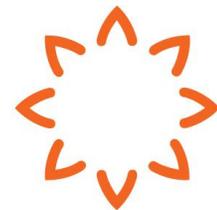
<http://www.goodfriendsusa.blogspot.com>

Good Friends Korea

E-mail: intnetwork@jungto.org

Tel: 82-2-587-8996; Fax: 82-2-587-8998

<http://www.goodfriends.or.kr>



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