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**[Hot Topics]**

**Reformation of Farmers Market Postponed 6 Months**

Reformation of farmers market was expected to begin in January 2009. Contrary to the expectation, its enforcement has been pushed back 6 months. Residents seemed happy with the decision. As a reflection, the price of food has dropped since January 3. At the nation’s major city markets, the price of rice has dropped from 2,000-2,200 NKW* (North Korean Won)/kg to 1,800 NKW/kg and the price of corn has reduced from 800-850 NKW/kg to 750 NKW/kg. The food price hasn't changed since the central party announced the plan that they would abolish general market and change to farmers market.

When the news of a 6 months extension was released, an official in *Pyongyang* said, "Everybody was concerned that if the market is abolished they would likely go through more difficult time than the Arduous March of 1990’s. I think their concern was reflected on the decision of extension." One official in Sungchun County, South Pyongan Province, said, "Even if it seems that the harvest last year was better than previous years. It did not turn the food situation around." Our county party as well as division (*Ri*) party have made suggestions to the central party." If general markets are abolished, the people in local areas would have to get through more difficult time than the Arduous March. Another official added, "The workers without food distribution need to get food, however, there is no place to provide them with food. How could we survive when all markets shut down?"

An official mentioned, "If we eliminate general market at this time, it could cause internal disturbance. General market is the only way for regular people to get food even when all markets are open. So shutting down the general market would make all people starve to death." Many people are concerned nationwide. Since central party has decided to carry out
plan step by step as they are watching the situation, it is known that a new farmers market policy will be effective in 6 months.

*US$1.00 is approximately 3,400 North Korean Won.

**A Nationwide Rally to Follow Through New Year’s Combined Editorial**

After a one day holiday on the first day of the New Year, the meeting has taken place from January 2 to achieve New Year’s combined editorial. In order to solve the food crisis, fertilizer preparation and Juche agricultural technique were emphasized. Before New Year's a combined editorial releasing, a variety of lectures for farming were held in nationwide farming areas. From December 17 to 26 last year, foremen of each working unit and team leaders in the farming villages gathered to give the lectures on creative, independent Juche agricultural techniques, “We need to establish material and technical foundation so that we can increase food product to solve food crisis. Therefore, farmers have to have new farming methods." Once the New Year's editorial was released, each city and county set to prepare farmyard manure. North Korean government ordered most of area to get farmyard manure on their own due to lack of Heungnam Fertilizer. People's assembly of major cities such as Chungjin, Pyongsung and Hamheung have ordered to prepare 500kg of farmyard manure and 30 kg of pieces of old metal per each worker in factories, untied enterprises and DWU.


On December 8 of last year, the Central Party’s Economic Policy Review Board summoned officials of the Agricultural Department and the Trade Department (무역성). They then held a meeting to deliver Kim Jong-Il’s word on the food situation and to discuss ways to make plans for and implement his order. Determining that the amount of food in the country was insufficient due to the 2008 food shortage, they decided that officials of the Trade Department would take the payment with food in the trade with China.

On December 21, those who work in the economic sector met to assess the status of the people’s economic situation. There were discussions on the worker’s ration, work hours, the production amount, equipment status at each factory, and enterprise at the meeting. In addition, it was determined that the national economy should be revived in the new year and handed down the plans for "adopting cutting-edge technologies that go with the information industry and modernizing of the factory in the new year.”

One of the Central Party officials whom was asked to assess the number of workers who do not come to work and to identify the amount of distribution said, "Take full advantage of production technology in producing goods in order to give stability to the workers and then gradually resolve the food distribution. Do not focus solely on the large factories in the light and heavy industry. Even if it is a petty shoe factory, we should manage the operation well to produce good products. In addition, if we track down the quantity of production and supply to the people, there is no need to import the Chinese-made shoes. Then that alone will be a big gain." In this meeting, the Central Party executives repeatedly stressed that "in 2009 we should make most efforts to the issues of food and clothing," and said, "There should be no recurrence of food shortage problems like in 2008."
[Food]

**Jungju City in North Pyongan Province, “Have not heard of distribution since 10 years ago”**

*Kim Soon-duck* (49), a resident in Ohryong-ri, Jungju City, North Pyongan Province, said she is worried because amount of distribution is too little. The reason there are little amount of distribution is because the soldiers transport grains away when farmers finish threshing them for army provisions. “The foreman of our working unit was storing some reserve foods to provide to people who miss work after the spring hardship season, but even those foods were taken away by the Farm Management Council.” *Lee Myong-sook* (43), Kim’s co-worker, said, “I have not heard of distribution since 10 years ago.” Such expression again implies that the amount of distribution is too little. “According to the merchants, farmers in other places seem to get at least 6 or 7 months of distribution. We will be happy with half of what they receive,” said Lee. One worker said, “Farmers do not have a sense of ownership for their lands because they do not get distributed. They only focus on a small patch lot or their family backyards.” Year 2009 began, but the residents in Jungju City are already worried about the food situation during the spring hardship season.

**A Farm Village in South Pyongan Distributes 7 Months Worth of Food**

*Moonduk, Pyongwon, Sookchun*, and a couple other Counties in South Pyongan Province distributed 7 months worth of food to the farmers. The officials at the Farm Management Council said that remaining 5 months worth of food would be distributed during the spring hardship season, which is the hardest time of the year. However, no farmer seems to believe these promises. *Kwak Mi-ok* (43), a resident in Wonhwa-ri, Pyongwon County, said, “They say they will provide food later, but check and see if they have any grains in the storage. There is no grain in the storage at the moment nor will they have any in April.” One official at the Farm Management Council said, “We just follow orders from higher parties. They order us to make army provisions our priorities and we have no choice but to follow that order. The parties ask us to educate people that feeding soldiers is a good thing,” admitting the difficulty of making the remaining portion of the distribution.

[Economy]

**The Wealthy Concerned about Lost Income from Servi–Car Business with the Implementation of the ‘1st–day Market’**

The Servi-Car business, as it is called in North Korea, is a highly desired business among the rich. The prohibition of private ownership of vehicles has led a number of wealthy individuals to register their names with factories or public enterprises to run car businesses. It would cost at least 500,000-600,000 NK Won or around 400,000 NK Won per month to register with the military or the police station respectively. On average, one must pay at least 200,000 to 300,000 NK Won a month to factories or public enterprises, which constitutes a significant sum of money going into running a business, which the average North Korean could not even dream of entering. Despite the high monthly costs, this business remains desirable because it only takes six months to breakeven on one’s investments. Profits can be
made not only by transporting passengers, but also by delivering fall harvests such as corn and beans or by transporting market supplies. However, in six months when general markets are reorganized into farmers markets (so-called “1st-day market”), the average number of days for business for the Servi-Car owners will be drastically reduced to the 1st, 11th, and 21st of every month. Consequently, the prospects are not bright for the business owners who are worried about the reduction in their income.

Control over Privately-Owned Public Baths in Pyongsung
Many wealthy people are involved in the public bath business. At the end of last year (2008), privately-run public baths in Pyongsung City of the South Pyongan Province were placed under investigation. The public bath owners charge up to 3,000 NK Won, which includes the basic 2,000 NK Won bath fee and other additional charges for soap and shampoo. Due to the poor supply of electric power in the city, many public bath owners are forced to raise bath fees to burn wood or coal to heat the water. In addition to this, around half of the income the owners make goes to public enterprises as a fee to use their names to run the businesses. If an owner earns 40,000 NK Won in profits a day, the owner pays 20,000 NK Won to the public enterprise as long as the bath is open for business. As the number of people profiting from the public bath businesses has increased, the Pyongsung police and public prosecutor’s stations have begun to control it. The Security Bureau visits the privately-run public baths almost every other day to charge a fine of 20,000 NK won. Mr. Kim, who runs a public bath, says, “I don’t know why they penalize us when the privately-run bath business has become no different from an ordinary business.”

Central Party Officials Failing to Achieve Grain Production Targets Harshly Criticized in North Hamgyong Province by Own Party
On December 22, the North Hamgyong Central Party held their plenary meeting where leading secretaries, chairpersons of the People’s Council, and chairpersons of the Agricultural Management Committees from each city and county together discussed the overall achievements of last year’s grain and military provision production goals. The leading secretary from the Central Party harshly criticized and called out all sorts of names to those who failed to achieve their production goals. He was especially harsh on the officials who failed to meet their goals for the past three years and even threatened to reevaluate their positions in the Central Party. At the meeting, the Party instructed all of the members to better manage the consumption of grains, and to conserve the yields by reducing the production of basic foods such as soybean paste to half its current production should the current food crisis not be resolved immediately. The Party also warned officials to heighten ideology training for the workers to guard against possible shifts in the workers’ ideology, occurring from long periods of food shortages and insufficient distribution.

[Politics]
A Military Unit Punished for “Damaging Relations between the Military and the People”
A military unit was severely punished for taking more than the ordered amount of food from the Local Grain Policy Enterprise in Seoheung County, North Hwanghae Province. The
military convoy took an additional 9 MT of corn during an unguarded moment by Local Grain Policy Enterprise personnel. The officers contacted the military unit after discovering missing merchandise, who subsequently denied the allegations. Seoheung County’s Local Grain Policy Enterprise filed complaints against the County Party who then passed it along to the People’s Defense Ministry for further investigation.

The People’s Defense Ministry decided to punish the military unit severely for damaging relations between the military and the people. This incident led to the subsequent discharge of a military general and an order for the members of the convoy to enlist in a full year of military education under military law. According to a Seoheung County official, “Taking 9 MT of raw corn during a desperate food crisis is tantamount to grand larceny against the government. It is unforgivable even for the brave of the Military First Era”. Another official added, “It was the first time a military office had filed complaints against the People’s Defense Ministry. There are serious efforts being taken to mitigate damaged relations between the people and the military as announced in the New Year’s editorial”

**Main Drug Stronghold Moves from Hamheung to South Pyongan Province**

There are signs of the main drug stronghold in Hamheung moving to South Pyongan Province including Pyongsung, Soonchun, Anju and others. After a series of policies geared towards eradicating drugs in Hamheung last year, drug producers are moving their operations to other provinces. The National Security Agency is expanding their dragnet to cities such as Soonchun and Pyongsung and hilltop neighborhoods in counties. On December 14 of last year, they arrested 17 drug producers in Soonchun City and publicly executed three of them. Six of the perpetrators were sentenced to life in prison while the remaining eight were sent to the Political Labor Detention Centers in Yoduck County, South Hamgyong Province. Although official drug investigations had ended in Soonchun City as of October 25, it failed to eradicate drug trafficking. Consequently, further investigations were resumed on December 20 to stamp out drug trafficking.

**Special Lecture from the Border Security Agency**

Border security was strengthened after attempted border crossings to China increased due to the river freezing over for the winter. Dealing with border-crossing problem was transferred from the police department to the security agency, followed by a lecture given at the Security Agency on December 15 of last year. The lecture included warnings like “Report family fleeing to South Korea in a timely manner, families with members that have fled to China will be banished to farming divisions(Ri)” as contents. Also included was advice to “Eat food as sparingly as possible and do not waste food in events like wedding ceremonies and such.” The lecture even included the well know threat that if you are caught running away to China, you could be sentenced to up to 10 years at re-education centers. This was the first time Security Agency gave a political lecture related to the food problem. On the one hand, it is known that among the people who were repatriated compulsorily to Sinuiju and Namyang from May to July, 2008, the ones caught running away from North Korea were transferred to political labor detention centers like the Yoduck Labor Detention Center (요덕관리소) in South Hamgyong Province.
The Anti-Socialist Conscience Investigation Patrol (ASCI) of the Security Agency, National Border Area Starts investigation
From January 10, the Security Agency started a special investigation of anti-socialist activities in the national border areas like Hoeryong, Moosan, Onsung, and others in the North Hamgyong Province. They gather in detail not just basic information about families such as the list of family members, the number, the constitution state, and such, but also more in-depth information such as who provides the living, what kind of business do they do if they have a business, whether the family has ever had help from relatives in China, etc. It is known that the purpose of ASCIP is for warning possible border-crossers and prosecuting attempted espionage easily.

[Society]
Taegung Lake’s Waterway Repair Construction Started
In the plenary meeting which was held the end of last year, Provincial party of South Pyongan Province decided to proceed with the repair operation of Gaechun-Taesung Lake’s water course and started the construction on January 5th. Meanwhile there have been massive breakdowns of the waterway due to heavy flooding, which has made securing the water for agricultural needs difficulty. Last year, an estimated 80 Jungbo* had hardship in farming because of the dry spell. Provincial party of South Pyongan Province is determined to complete the watercourse repair as soon as possible, before the farming starts. They have ordered the cities and counties to mobilize special storm troops for this purpose.

*Jungbo: unit of land, 1 Jungbo is 2.45 acres

Public Officials in Pyongyang Banned From Using Mobile Phones
Mobile phones are operating in Pyongyang since last mid-December. However, public officials working under the government cannot use them under any conditions. Anyone working in a position with access to national secrets, including officials working in the central party, the administration and the judiciary, are prohibited from using mobile phones. The main consumers of cell phones now are wealthy general citizens or trade officials. Also the mobile phone only includes coverage within Pyongyang. It is possible to make calls from Pyongyang to outside the city, but the outside cannot reach Pyongyang via cell phones.

[Women/Children/Education]
Kotjebi in Hamheung Station Died from Suffocation in a Commuter Train
On December 25, Kotjebi (homeless children) slept in a commuter train at Hamheung Station, South Hamgyong Province and died from suffocation due to gas and coal. In the train, there was a coal stove and a trainman put wet coal on the burning coal to put it out. The Kotjebi that usually sleep in the train died from the fire. During this time, the stove produced carbon monoxide. On the day of the incident, three Kotjebis out of 17 who slept beside the stove, breathed in the gas and died on the spot. The others were critically poisoned and sent to the hospital. However, they were in critical condition and considered hopeless. If
they had received urgent treatment, they could have survived. However, they lost the chance to survive because the trainman who found them did not pay careful enough attention.

**Haeju City Inspected Illegal CDs of Middle School Students**

Last October 8th, Haeju City in South Hwanghae Province, organized the Investigation Patrol of the Anti-Socialist activities of teenagers and begun an inspection. Haeju authorities sent its officers of the City Party, police stations, prosecutory offices, and the Youth Union to middle schools in Haeju and let these officers inspect students without advance notice. When students went to school or back home, the inspectors examined students’ bags, uniforms, shoes, wallets, and any belongs without notice. At the end of the inspection on December 20, the officers seized over 200 CDs total that were copies of South Korean dramas and movies and Chinese dramas such ‘Daughters of an Emperor (황제의 딸)’ at Haewoon Middle School and 3 other middle schools. They seized over 100 CDs at one single middle school. Many students brought these CDs to their school to exchange them for their friends’ CDs. The City Party concluded that such loose control was the main reason for the abundant amount of illegal CDs. Therefore, they severely criticized the first Secretary of the Youth Union and ordered him to strictly conduct Ideology Lectures.

**Democratic Women’s Union (DWU) is to Consider Economic Situation of Household When Collecting “Patriotic Rice”**

Since December 17th, Gaechun City Democratic Women’s Union in South Pyongan Province has been collecting patriotic rice from its members. Each member is expected to donate 1kg of grain, 200g of pork, and 1 bar of soap. Since the donation drive is not going as planned, the chief of DWU is personally visiting each household and checking each economic situation. The donation works in such a way that a household may be exempted from donations when it is determined that they cannot afford to make any. The DWU members seem to appreciate the fact that the economic condition of a household is taken into consideration unlike the previous practice of mandatory donations.

**[Accidents]**

**An Accidental Artillery Rocket Explosion at a Military Unit in Seonchun County**

Last December 12th, there was an accidental artillery rocket explosion at a military unit in Seonchun County, North Pyongan Province. This accident caused the death of four soldiers and 26 hospitalized men.

**A Woman Killed for a Bike**

Night of last December 16th, Lee living in 23rd unit of Kangandong, Soonchun City of South Pyongan Province, murdered a young woman who was on her way home from work taking her cash and bike with him. A security officer in Kangandon who was just starting his patrol caught Lee at the scene of the crime and arrested him right away.

**[Commentary]** Recognition That Market Control Is Impossible Without Ration
It is reported that the reform of the farmers markets, which was supposed to be implemented in the New Year, has been pushed back for six months. This is the result of opinions expressed by those in the field that people will suffer difficulties worse than that of the Arduous March in case the markets close down. People worried about market closure are welcoming the decision; food prices also show the trend of temporary decline. From the point of view of the residents, the postponement of market closure allowed them to breathe a sigh of relief.

Just as the attempt to resume the public distribution system in the fall of 2005 failed to take effect after a few months, the public distribution system stopped working once again after the rations were distributed in some regions. Since people do not trust the distribution office any more, people find it fortunate that the market will stay open and that they will be able to purchase food.

In fact, skeptical views were pervasive among people, as well as among party members, regarding the issue of closing general markets and transforming them into farmers’ markets. Furthermore, it is also true that there are not enough means to implement the policy, based solely on the order from the higher-ups, when the distribution center ceases to function. Therefore, it is unclear whether market closure can be implemented now, or even after six months have elapsed. It is literally impossible to close down the trading markets without normalizing the public distribution system.

North Korean authorities defined the market as 'a breeding ground of capitalism', which is corrosive to the socialist system, and they have cracked down on that market. Nevertheless, the failure of the public distribution system is the largest reason that people are depending on the market for their sustenance. Marketplaces appeared where the distribution centers ceased to exist. What is corrosive to socialism is not the fact that people go to the market, but rather that distribution centers have no rice to distribute. Six months from now, the peak of food shortages will arrive during the farm hardship period in the spring. At that time, the situation will have become a lot worse that it is right now, after the harvest. Merely doing everything possible to prepare for this year's crop is more realistic. It is also advised that North Korean authorities more actively seek out external support such as food imports.

[Investigative Report] Reading New Year’s Combined Editorial 2009 (2)

“Let the New Year Shine as a Year of Revolutionary Climax, Heralded by Martial Bugle Calls”

Composition of New Year’s Combined Editorial 2009

- Overall Summary of Accomplishments in 2008 (10%)
- Ideological Mobilization 2009 (40%)
- Sectional Assigned Tasks (10%)
Hollow Return to ‘Socialist Planned Economy’

The first half of the New Year’s Combined Editorial 2009 briefly mentions the accomplishments of 2008 and proposes a heightened Chollima Movement 2009 as a rousing call. The Editorial claims that the nation should succeed in its ideological warfare through wholehearted unity and patriotism. The nation should rely on Juche ideology, the principle of Military First and reject imperialist ideo-cultural invasion and psychological conspiracy. Specifically, the nation needs collectivism, self-sustainment and speedy warfare. Prior to mentioning the various accomplishments toward establishing a strong economic nation, the Editorial tries to instill a sense of the inevitability of its victory in warfare.

“The victory in the total warfare toward establishing a strong economic nation is inevitable, as every citizen is equipped with limitless creativity and the powerful Juche industry is armed with new technology.”

It asserts without hesitation that victory is inevitable because of ‘powerful Juche industry.’ It is difficult to locate in the texts what the ‘powerful Juche industry’ refers to. It merely mentions that the important task at this time in economic buildup is ‘to achieve a decisive breakthrough in enhancing all the production levels to their peaks in people’s economy’ based on the ‘superiority of the socialist planned economy.’

This portion of the Editorial is expected to be controversial even domestically in North Korea. Firstly, does the ‘powerful Juche industry’ exist at all? Secondly, it is an undeniable reality that the socialist planned economy has collapsed beyond the point of no return. Domestically in North Korea, everyone knows that The National Planning Committee, the backbone of the planned economy, is powerless. The divisional economy has set itself up in place of the planned economy controlled by the Central Party. According to the policy of the Central Party stressing the importance of self-sustainment, all the economic units of party, military, and regional administrative organizations are divided. The Central Party cannot give up Chamber 38 and 39. The secondary economy is solidified to the extent that the national government hesitates to interfere in local matters and the divisional economies are mutually exclusive.

Now that the backbone of the planned economy is broken, it really is meaningless to list all the sectional tasks. Requests to the various industries such as metallurgy, electricity, coal, rail transportation, extraction, food, fishery, light industry and housing in Pyongyang are nothing

1) Chamber 38 and 39 (38 호실, 39 호실): One of the Financial and Economy Bureau under the Joseon Workers’ Party.
more than a lot of empty shouting. Statements that have been already presented are being repeated here again.

They claim that economic buildup should be strengthened by national centralization and consistent guidance and that planned projects should be revised reflecting developments in society. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether there is any plan to restore the planned projects controlled by the central government. They assert that, “the superiority of a socialist planned economy should be promoted by means of renovated economic management.” If this assertion presages the elimination of General Markets, promotion of State-run Stores, and a policy of food sales at the Local Grain Policy Enterprise, then the planned projects currently controlled by the central government are expected to be carried out in small scales. Large-scale divisional economies such as the party economy, military economy and specialty economy are not dealt with, and only the limited market economy, which affects peoples’ daily lives, will be subject to control. Could this kind of oversight be the stated ‘return to a socialist planned economy’?

**To the People’s Army, “Do Harm To People No More”**

Unlike in the previous year’s declaration, The People’s Army is mentioned along with the normal subjects of economy, culture, arts, education and sports. The New Year’s Combined Editorial 2008 unusually included a great deal regarding The People’s Army, which reflected recent failures in the behavior of the military. Its interpretation could be that a tightening of military discipline (among the whole army) would lead to a tightening of discipline in the whole society (the entire party, entire population). This year’s Editorial designated the military as having a lower priority, secondary to other tasks.

Many expressions and tales of the Army are repeated this year, such as the title “pillar of revolution supporting the party’s leadership in the principle of Military First,” “warriors with courage, each matching for a hundred” and “realization of solid unity of government and military, and harmony of politics and military.” What attracts attention this year is the expression, “with the motto ‘Help people!’ flying high in the air, let’s proudly solidify the unity of people and military.”

Relationship between the people and the military has been likened to that of fish and water for a long time. However, as economic crisis lingers and more emphasis is placed on the principle of Military First, the relationship between the people and the military has gotten worse and worse. The military has also been suffering from the food crisis since the March of Hardship, resulting in an increase in crimes committed by military personnel and significant damages to the population. Consequently, the motto ‘Help people!’ is considered to be a reflection of the damage done to North Korea’s civilians by the military. During the previous year, ‘North Korea Today’ often reported incidents when soldiers committed collective assault and robbery during times of severe food shortage. Soldiers should set examples for society in ‘all aspects of ideology and spirit, morality and culture.’ In reality, military behavior falls short of such goals, which has led to appeals for improvement in the relationship between the people and the military. The appeals are also warnings of harsher penalties in case of any future violations.
The following statements concern the “attitude of The People’s Army toward those who violate our independence, pride and institutions of socialism.”

“Our guns, supported by determination and enmity based on class struggle, will punish any provocations by the enemy without tolerance and mercy.”

Although it is not specified, ‘those who violate our independence, pride and institutions of socialism’ could be interpreted to refer to ‘South Korea.’ Thus they issued a military warning toward some ‘anti-North activities’ which try to influence the relationship between North and South Korea.

**Role of the Party, a Request Echoing the 1970s**

Instructions to The People’s Army are followed by appeals to the Party, administrative organizations, Labor Class, Youth Union, Workplace Union and Democratic Women’s Union.

It requests that party organizations should bring forth a ‘new transformation as in the 1970s’ and solidify the ‘projects to establish the party’s sole system of leadership.’ For the successful second Chollima leap forward, the party should perform its proper role as in the 1970s. Conversely, it means the party is not doing its role properly. The assessment by the North Korean leadership is that the party is inconsistently partitioned, mirroring the divisional economy. A collapse of the central distribution system caused a weakening of the ‘primary channel of communication’ that is embodied in the chain of command from central party to provincial party, then to city or county party. Formally there exists a communication channel, that is, city/county party to provincial party and provincial party to central party. Each level should survive on the ‘self-sustaining’ principle, and as a consequence, lower levels often fail to report to higher levels anything that could be criticized. The central party has already lost control of the lower levels in the party system. As a corrective measure, the central party sends out intensive directive teams or inspectors against anti-socialist activities, but its effectiveness isn’t certain and ‘only temporary’ as many party leaders cynically assess them.

It has been a long time since there was Democracy within the Party in North Korea. Opinions from the lower levels never reach the top and even if they did, they are never considered. The Central party, supposed to play the role of mother, never considers the wider population and often does not tolerate even the lower level in the party system. An inability to resolve problems raised by the lower level undermines the Central Party’s credibility. In such a situation, it seems to be impossible to return to the level of party discipline seen in the 1970s. Kim Young-joo was in charge of party organizational tasks in 1970s, proposing ‘ten principles of sole party leadership.’ In those days, the distribution system, democracy within the party and stability of the cabinet economy were maintained at a satisfactory level, relatively speaking. All of those strong qualities have since disappeared. In order to bring back the glories of the 1970s, those conditions would have to be rebuilt one by one.
Role of Labor Class Is Unusually Emphasized

Additionally, administration workers, the Youth Union, Workplace Union and the Democratic Women’s Union are mentioned. Statements concerning the Labor Class\(^2\) are particularly important.

“The Labor Class is the proudest main force in our heightened history and the basic battle unit in establishing a strong nation.”

The Labor Class is described as ‘an exploring hero leading the era’ in the transformational period of revolution. Considering the assessment of the Labor Class as ‘not trustworthy’ upon completion of the Third Seven-Year Plan, the above description is unbelievable praise. The Labor Class is praised as having ‘Kanggye spirit.’ Kanggye spirit is equivalent to ‘the self-sustaining spirit.’ On one hand, the soldiers were requested to ‘help people’ and were pressed hard on why they could not set examples in ‘all aspects of ideology and spirit, morality and culture.’ On the other hand, the Labor Class is consistently praised and encouraged. This is because the Labor Class is the one that will practically lead the heightened Chollima Movement. As administrative workers and Youths set examples with the party leadership in terms of ideological warfare, it is requested that the Labor Class should also rise up. It is similar to the request to be ‘an attacking warrior at the time of Military First with a revolutionary soldier’s spirit and Kanggye spirit.’ This is a notable shift from last year when it was claimed that the main force was the party leaders and workers in the major enterprises.

Improvement in Relationship with South Korea Starts with ‘Joint Announcements of 6.15 (June 15) and 10.4 (October 4)’

Immediately following the appeals for a heightened Chollima Movement is a mention of the relationship between North and South Korea and international relationships. What is impressive is the assertion, ‘Unification of motherland is the desire of all Koreans and a task of the utmost urgency.’ The reason for mentioning the unification first is to make the assessment, ‘the accession in the previous year of conservative South Korea group has brought a serious challenge.’ North Korean authorities emphasize, ‘the only practical principles for unification are the joint announcements of 6.15 and 10.4,’ recalling that the South Korea administration totally refused to accept the 6.15 and 10.4 joint announcements. They continue to claim ‘We will not tolerate any diversions from the historical North-South joint announcements. For unification of motherland and prosperity of the people, North-South joint announcements should be advocated and carried out.’ This can be interpreted to mean that North Korea will deal with South Korea only when South Korea accepts the 6.15 and 10.4 joint announcements.

Now that North Korea has made its intentions clear, it is necessary that South Korea should do the same. The 6.15 and 10.4 joint announcements should not become a piece of political

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\(^2\) Labor Class (노동계급) does not refer to any workers, but is considered as a unit.
propaganda monopolized by any one side. They should be honored as agreements between leaders of North and South Korea. Conflicts in details, if any, should be resolved through dialogue.

It is fortunate that North Korean authorities describe the South Korean government as ‘conservative South Korea authorities’ in trying to avoid extreme expressions. However, their expression such as ‘restoring the Fascist dictatorship’ does not seem to show the appropriate level of respect to the other side. Those statements do not represent any individuals, rather they are formal documents of domestic and international significance. As members of the international community, each government should use language appropriate in polite diplomacy. It is better for each government to avoid blaming one another and resuming the customary finger pointing. We desire to see in this New Year mutual harmony and real progress toward unification of the two Koreas.

This concludes our review of The New Year’s Combined Editorial 2009. We pay so much attention to it because their ‘motto’ is the criterion by which North Korea moves during the year. This year North Korea renewed its efforts with respect to the Chollima Movement. Its forecast came December 24 of last year when Chairman Kim visited the Chollima Steel United Enterprise, which followed the New Year’s Combined Editorial. What remains to be seen is how the flame of the Chollima Movement will be spread all over the nation. Moving past the optimistic declarations, the reality is that there are formidable obstacles to such reforms. We will be watching to see how North Korea tries to establish a strong nation under these vicious conditions. 😊

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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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