["Good Friends” desires to help the North Korean residents through humanistic point of view, and publishes “North Korea Today” describing the way the North Korean residents live as real as possible.]

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[Hot Topics]
“Fertilizer Is the Biggest Problem”, Declares the Conference of Agricultural Enthusiasts
On the 24th of the last month, the Ministry of Agriculture held “The Conference of Agricultural Enthusiasts.” The participants were all the Party Secretaries, the Chairmen of the People’s Assembly and the Chairmen of the Farm Management Committees of cities and counties. The topic of discussion was “On Solving the Food Shortage Problem.”
Presentations were made by Chief Engineers and Chairmen of Maintenance Committees, who produced last year’s best crop production. The Conference pointed out with grave concern that “a poor crop this year might be an obstacle to successful opening of a strong nation in 2012 and a good crop this year depends on solving the problem of fertilizer shortage.”

The Conference participants emphasized, “A good crop this year needs an increase in production of alternative fertilizer for the farms. Increased crop production requires that the quality of ‘Heukbosan fertilizer’ be enhanced.”

**Fertilizer Council Meeting Adjunct to the Conference of Agricultural Enthusiasts**

The Conference of Agricultural Enthusiasts was followed by a meeting of the Fertilizer Council. The Council is intended to assess the requirements of fertilizer production for this year and to plan the measures for preparing resources for fertilizer production. The participants at the Council were the Chief Engineers of fertilizer production units, such as the Heungnam Fertilizer Factory and the Soonchun Fertilizer Factory. Their conclusion was, “there will not be any fertilizer arriving from a foreign country. Presently, our only option is to put our best efforts into the Heungnam Fertilizer Factory. We should maximize our fertilizer production so that the fertilizer may be applied at least once to all the farms in the nation.”

[Food]

**Ongjin County Distributes Only Three Months Worth of Food to Farmers**

Farms in Ongjin County of South Hwanghae Province distributed to farmers only three months worth of food for the whole year. The rest of food was sent out to be part of the army provisions. In early March (present), households that are short of food have already started living on porridge or skipping meals increasingly. Some households have only lunch for the whole day. As the condition gets worse, increasing number of farmers are missing work. Farmers who are missing work go to alluvial mining saying that going to the farm does not guarantee food. They can get only 1-2kgs of whole corn from mining all day long. Farmers deeply worry about repeating the nightmare of the last period of farm hardships.

**Hoeryong City Declares, “We Refuse to Submit the Entire Asked Amount to the Army” to 9th corps of Geumya County**

Hoeryong City of North Hamgyong Province is holding onto its position that it can no longer give the army its full provisions to support the bureau of the 9th corps of regiment of artillery rockets in Geumya County of South Hamgyong Province. The city was supposed to give 650 tons of food but instead gave 360 tons due to the lack of food. Hoeryong City needs to prepare food for workers building the town of mother Kim Jong-sook. Worker of the City Party and the City Grain Policy Bureau called in question for the problem of the
army provisions and the city said, “To build the town of mother Kim Jong-sook, we have to distribute the food we store at the City Grain Policy Bureau to workers. Therefore, we cannot give the army provisions anymore.” While the 9th corp's supporting bureau-officers of Geumya County begged for food, they ended up fighting with government workers of the City Grain Policy Bureau as they were refused. However, Hoeryong city kept its firm attitude that it cannot give provisions anymore.

**Hoeryong City Distributes Rotten Corn Because of Bad Storage**
From February 23, Hoeryong City distributed to the residents whole corn for February’s food supply. However, 60% of the whole corn had mold or was rotten due to the bad storage at the City Grain Policy Bureau's food storehouse. The starved residents went to the supply station even for rotten corn. Moreover, some people even bargained with people who had gotten their portion to buy the rotten corn off of them at a lower price.

[Economy]

**The Ahnju Farm Cut Back Workers' Distributions to Buy More Work Cows**
On February 23, three work cows were stolen from the 2nd Work Unit at the Woonsongri Farm in Ahnju County, South Pyongan Province. Consequently, the unit has not been able to complete farm tasks such as compost transportation and seed planting. Since then, the managers and supervisors at the farm have constantly worried about how to buy work cows again because one ox is over 65,000 to 70,000 NK Won. Inevitably, they decided to reduce the spring distribution portions for the workers. The workers will get only one month’s worth of food distributed instead of the usual 2 months worth. The remaining one-month worth will be used to buy a work cow.

**Instruction to Public Enterprises, “Expropriate Small Pieces of Land to Plant Trees.”**
On February 5, an official document was sent out to every public enterprise in Onsong County in North Hamgyong Province, instructing all to expropriate small pieces of land for planting trees. The document also instructed explicitly for the Democratic Women’s Union to plant 24.5 acres of trees to be used for firewood. The residents who farm on small pieces of land strongly opposed these instructions. The residents criticized the government’s decision, saying, “The land was just plowed for farming, and now the government is taking it away.” They also predicted that there would be many conflicts between the landowners and the Public Enterprises, which should carry out the instruction.

**In Sariwon, Women's Agriculture Work Teams Shaky**
In Sariwon, North Hwanghae Province, there is an increasing absence of women volunteers at farms. Last month, there was an incident whereby about 50 female volunteers in Eunduk County, North Hamgyong Province did not show up when they did not get their food rations. In Sariwon, the numbers of volunteers decreased significantly starting from the 18th, right after the 2.16 Holiday last month. Only about 10 members show up from a
voluntary women’s work group of 45 members. With a significant decrease in attendance rate, the Farm Managers warned the City Party and town halls, "We do not need women volunteers and we will kick them out." The City Party claims that since this policy was an official initiative, it needs to be implemented successfully. A volunteer expressed her opinion and said, "They should give us some proportions that will help with our living condition but they don’t give us anything. In addition, they give us hard work because we’re unfamiliar with farm work." An officer sighed, "They allowed women's farm worker volunteer program due to lack of laborers but it’s facing a lot of static and difficulties."

[Politics]

Public Execution in Pyongsung after Electricity Inspection
On February 24, the Province Director of the Electric Department and the Director of Electricity Distribution in Pyongsung, South Pyongan Province, were publicly executed in front of all the members of People's Committee of the City and the County and Electric Distribution Directors from across the country. This came about as the result of the first Electric Cross Inspection from each province. The executed were accused of sending military industrial electric power to the regular factories and enterprises after receiving bribes and goods. They were described as “traitors who corrupted the modern socioeconomic management system by providing military industrial electric power to the factories and businesses at this time of electric supply shortage.” They were also accused of charging double the amount of 67,000 NK won that the State ordered that they charge for an electric meter; they charged 132,000 NK won instead. There had been many complaints regarding the electric power supplies because electric power could only be afforded by those who could buy a meter, preventing poor residents from using electricity, which they claimed was not fair. At the time of the trial, the High Prosecutor’s Office criticized through a roving car announcement, "This is a criminal act of the Class Enemies, separating the Party and the People." The family members of executed workers were sent to prison under the Department of Security. This was the first execution of workers as a result of Electricity Inspection. In the meantime, they also fired 4 officers who made arbitrary decisions on electricity use in the Department of Electricity.

Second Electricity Cross-Inspection in Ryanggang Province and North Hamgyong Province
Electricity inspection was resumed in Ryanggang Province and North Hamgyong Province. The inspection started on the 28th of last month and lasts until 20th of this month. Workers from the Party Province, the Province Prosecutor’s Station and the Province Police Station were chosen as the Inspecting Members. They will address the conditions of electricity use in detail. Especially, they will prosecute and punish officers who use industrial electricity without the State's consent and those who received bribes and allowed personal use of electricity intended for industrial use. They will take action against anyone without regard to their ranks. On the other hand, the Department of Electricity predicted worsening of the
electricity shortage situation due to the lack of electricity produced by the Hydraulic Power Plant.

North Pyongan Province Conducts Inspections for False Health Examinations
The Public Prosecutor’s Office of North Pyongan Province is looking into the hospitals under the Province Department of Health. The reason is the accusation that the hospitals were falsifying health examination results by marking someone as sick although they were healthy. Those who are well off would pay to obtain a false health examination in order to be delisted permanently from the factory workers’ attendance sheet. The inspection began when the Province Party and the Province Health Department received a large number of complaints over the practice. As a result, the inspection examined files going back five years and discovered about 40 incidences of hospitals issuing false health examinations after taking money.

Friends Falling out Leads to Accusations of Watching South Korean TV Dramas
In Pyongsung of the South Pyongan Province, four middle-school girls were caught watching illegal recorded material. Two years ago, these students watched the Korean drama “Autumn Story.” Five friends who were close at the time gathered at a home to watch this drama. However, out of these friends, Kim (age 17) started to grow further apart from the group and then later reported her friends for watching the drama. Since she turned herself in, Kim was not found responsible for her actions but her friends were immediately arrested. Each girl had to pay more than $500 as bribe money to be released after spending two months in detention. Because the fathers of the four girls had relatively high-ranking positions such as police officials and factory secretary, the punishment was not as severe as it could have been. However, while in jail, the girls were beaten, poorly fed and not allowed to sleep, leading to poor health afterwards. The father of one of the released girls, Park’s (age 17), said, “Because I had some money and power, we were able to get her released. Without these, my daughter would be in prison and my family banished.” A member of the “Group Against Watching Illegal Recordings” said, “All south (Korean) movie watching result in a minimum of a jail sentence. Those girls are lucky that their fathers intervened because, if not, their lives would be practically over.”

[Society]
[3.8 The Election Day] Onsung, "Get Dressed up and Tidy out the House."
In Onsung, North Hamgyong Province, voting began at 8:00 AM on March 8th. A veteran who could not make it to the polls did a traveling vote. When the head of the neighborhood unit and the election committee visited his home, his place looked fussy and cluttered. Visitors asked “Why don’t you change into clean clothes and tidy out your house?” The veteran’s wife got rebuked by visitors and she replied back saying “I have no new clothes to wear. Look at the pot. Don’t you see what we ate for breakfast?” She opened the lid and showed them inside of the pot.” The head of the neighborhood unit and the election committee wrote down all information for the report.
Jung Geum-nye, a woman in her thirties wore her underwear when the election committee visited her house. She also did a traveling vote because she was not able to walk. She cast her vote in the room where there was no portrait of Kim Jong-Il. The election committee and police officers were mad that she did not show her respect. They then warned her that her husband would be disadvantageous at the general resident’s meeting for election.

After the election, the DWU (Democratic Women's Union) gathered on March 8th for the Women’s Day celebration, but it was not successful. The majority of housewives did not join the party in order to save money. Kim Myun-hye, a woman in her thirties said, “If I save money for this party my family can have decent meals everyday." Han Sung-ok, a woman in her forties said, “The economic situation is not as good as before and there is no way to earn money nowadays. Therefore, I do not want to spend a large amount of money when my whole family can enjoy decent meals.” A common opinion of the housewives is that if the gathering is free of charge, then they will participate. In the meantime, other cities and counties’ DWU held events such as playing 'yut' game and having a food competition show.

[3/8 The Election Day] Power Supplied Specially on the Election Day, Citizens say "It is Like a Big Holiday."
On the day of the election, power was supplied from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm in Onsung County. It was a rare case that power was provided for a long time. The residents seemed happy saying "It is like a big holiday!" Power was provided even from midnight to 5:00 am on the Election Day, which made the residents happier.

[3/8 The Election Day] North Hamgyong Provincial Party Dispatches Department Managers to Each Cities and Counties
The North Hamgyong Provincial Party dispatched its department managers and higher ranked staff members to each city and county. The purpose of this dispatch was to monitor election-related political events and inspect whether there were any people not voting. Since seven days prior to the Election Day, each district office summoned the heads of the Neighborhood Units to hold a Meeting for guaranteeing the Election. Each district instructed residents to vote from 8 o’clock in the morning of the Election Day at the voting stations. When residents did not show up to vote after 8 o’clock in Yeokjeon-dong, Hoeryong City of North Hamgyong Province, the heads of the Neighborhood Units screamed to instigate people to vote and made many residents uncomfortable. Some residents expressed their discomfort by arguing directly with the heads of the Neighborhood Units. Meanwhile, on the 5th of the month, the National Defense Committee ordered People’s Armed Forces to send one high-ranking military official from each district for support. These military officials were ordered to be responsible for instructing Civilian Defense Force to complete their guard duties without any problems.
Women/Children/Education

Haeju City, Teachers Fired for Using Corporal Punishment and Extra-contribution Burden

Haeju City in South Hwanghae Province fired 5 teachers for extra contribution and corporal punishment-related reasons, and sentenced 6 teachers in the City’s training center for two to four months. The City Party Department of Education and the People’s Committee Department of Education inspected elementary and middle schools from the 5th of the month until the 27th. For parents, extra contribution burdens that schools were requesting from them were big burdens on their shoulders. For that reason, many students were absent from schools. Some teachers beat students for not making extra contributions, which brought intense protests from the parents. Parents, who could not criticize teachers directly, began reporting teachers that had punished students. In response to mounting protests from the parents, the City Party began inspections last month. The City Party found that there were currently 105 students from middle schools and 70 from primary schools who could not come to school due to the burden of extra contribution. After March 8th, workers from the Youth Union will be selected as inspectors to start inspecting schools in the rural region.

As An Infant Died, A Loving Couple Got Separated

Kim, Hye-young (29) living in Liwon County, South Hamgyong Province was separated from her husband a while ago. She met him at their workplace, and lived in a one-bedroom house with her parents-in-law, a sister-in-law, and a brother-in-law. Their living standard could not have been worse, as they had to worry about every meal. Finally, the couple decided to move out from their house. As she moved out, she got pregnant and felt despaired.

Because she was expecting a child soon, her husband went to trade by himself. She did not have any place to stay, so she slept and waited for him in a station. Last summer, she delivered the expected child. Mrs. Kim was discouraged a lot because they were homeless and poor and had a baby. She said, “We were very happy to have a child, but we were utterly exhausted. However, we made a promise that we would take care of our baby in any case, even sacrificing ourselves.” The wife kept waiting for her husband. She continuously waited for him by soothing a peevishly crying child at the station. Having even a shabby house was their hope.

Because her husband traded any items, by buying them first in one place, and selling them in other locations, he usually did not come for several days. Because she trusted in his promise, she just waited for him. Some passengers felt so sorry for her and her baby that they gave the young mother and her poor infant food. Kkotjebi (homeless) girls staying at the station also shared the begged food with Mrs. Kim and the baby. People who saw her soothing her baby and waiting for her husband everyday felt pitiful and strong sympathy. Every night station police officers inspected travel certificates of passengers in the waiting room, and would fine people if they did not have a certificate. Whenever they inspected,
Mrs. Kim and the Kkotjebi children were evacuated. Although their life was so hard, they resolved to take care of the baby. However, their resolution came to nothing in the New Year.

On the 8th of last month, the baby got a severely high fever, and they went to a hospital. A doctor diagnosed the illness as acute pneumonia. To save the baby, they spent all their savings. In spite of their efforts and troubles, the feeble baby died. The exhausted husband and wife, who did not get any rest or eat enough, cried for several days and decided to separate. The husband went back to his parents’ house, and the wife went to Kanggye, Jagang Province where her sister lives. Against their will, the loving couple had to separate.

Three Singing Kkotjebi (Homeless) Sisters at Gohwon
Three Kkotjebi (homeless) children at Gohwon Station in Gohwon County, South Hamgyong Province, are popular because of their singing voices. Although there are many Kkotjebi children singing and begging, these 3 children are more famous than others because their sad songs touch people. Once they sing, people surround them quickly. They sing merrily and sometimes perform magic shows. When they finish their songs, some people request them to sing more. Some people curiously ask their ages. They have similar ages of about 11 or 12 years old. They are not sisters, but they are called ‘three singing Kkotjebi sisters’ because they are always getting together and singing. They usually stay at Gohwon Station, but they travel from place to place by stealing train rides. They have been too many places, almost every place around the location, such as Gohwon, Hamheung, Hongwon, Sinpo, Danchun, Gimchaek, Gilju, etc. Although they travel a lot, they rarely have food. Many adults feel sorry for them and say, “If they have parents, they can go to school to develop their gifted skills.” However, nobody wants to take care of them.

[Accidents]

Middle school student drowned while gathering seaweed
In Samhaeri, Chungan District, Chungjin City of North Hamgyong Province, a middle school student drowned. Last month on the 24th, Lee Jong-il, a fourth grader who attended Samhaeri Middle School drowned while in the sea to gather seaweed. A water plant clung to his legs so he could not escape. Lee had lived as a breadwinner from last summer. His father passed away in June of the past year. His mother who supplied her family with meals passed away in July after his father’s death. Lee lived gathering seaweed, sea tangle, and so on, living with his grandmother and little brother after his parent’s death. His village people cannot help feeling sorry, and say that a good-natured and well-behaved child died.

Railroad Tie Accident in Daeheung-Danchun Area
Before the 2.16 holiday last month, a railroad tie accident occurred again in the Daeheung-Danchun area. This time, Park Hee-jah (age 24) who is a conductor at the Danchun branch office of Hamheung Railroad Division, was the victim of the accident. On January 21, Mr. Kang Young-cheol, who worked at the passenger car enterprise, was killed. The Railroad
Conductor Company serves the duties of both conductor and laborer and it has about 200 employees. This year, the railroad tie assignment is given to each employee and 10 logs were assigned to each person. The Railroad Conductor Company sent its employees to Danchun city, Daeheung area for the production of railroad ties.

They were assigned to the job without learning the safety rules. They cut the logs from a tree high in the mountains and bring them down after tying the logs to a rope, but each log goes down very fast because of the weight. Because the speed of the log is too fast, people holding on to the rope cannot keep up with the speed. Ms. Park fell down after being hit by a log from behind while she was dragging the log down the hill. She was taken to hospital urgently, but the injury to the head was severe. She could not regain consciousness. The company said the accident was caused by carelessness on her part. So, they made arrangements for a funeral without any compensation. People are even more sympathetic because Ms. Park was killed before her upcoming wedding, which was scheduled on February 16. The crew is popular as marriage partners because they are good looking and have a good physique. Ms. Park was also good looking and was to marry the son of an official. Park’s mother and father passed out several times through sadness while looking at the items prepared for the wedding. People in the neighborhood also shared the sadness. They felt she was a young flower that had to die before she bloomed.

[Commentary]

South Korean Government’s Decision is Necessary for Humanitarian Fertilizer Support

While the North Korean nuclear issue has temporarily slowed down, the missile issue has emerged, as the eye of the storm since the beginning of 2009. North Korea announced it would launch ‘Kwang-myong-sung 2’ between the 4th and the 8th of next month. On the 13th, the Korean government expressed concern about the short notice of the launch, and urged it to be stopped. Previously on the 9th, North Korea disconnected the inter-Korean military communication lines in response to the beginning of the South Korea-US joint military exercises, “Key Resolve,” and blocked access to Kaesong industrial compound for the day. The traffic was resumed a day later, but the access was banned again on the 13th. Both South and North Korea are strengthening hard-line policies and hostility against each other due to the South Korea-US joint military training, ‘Key Resolve’ for North Korea, and also due to the ‘Kwang-myong-sung 2’ launch for South Korea.

Some may ask how one can talk about 'humanitarian aid' again at a serious time like this? Some also say the Good Friends always insist on "Sending rice and fertilizer to North Korea." Even those who are sympathetic to North Korean people, and those who talk about peace, may say that this is not the time to talk about the 'humanitarian assistance,' meaning this is not the right atmosphere.
North Korean people are suffering while nobody listens. They ignore the issues and look the other way. Now is the time to send in the fertilizer. The food is running out again in the rural areas, and the incidents of starvation are increasing. The shortage of manpower in the rural areas is serious, because a lot of farmers died last year. The phenomenon of the dissolution of families is deepening because mothers (wives), who are responsible for the livelihood of the family, become ill or die. We can hear the voices of North Koreans’ moaning in pain all the time, so how can we remain silent simply because the time is not right?

On the 12th, President *Lee Myung-bak* said at the “Meeting of Retired Senior Leaders,” “One of the current administration’s policies is to help North Korea with sincerity. This is not the kind of problem that can be solved by giving rice and fertilizer.” He said he would not use “a short-term prescription designed to smoothen the North-South relations.” If the purpose is to show the sincerity of helping North Korea, humanitarian assistance should be the starting point. Humanitarian support must not be used as a means “to maintain inter-Korean relations.” This is a separate issue to pursue based on a humanitarian spirit only, separate from political issues. This is an issue in which only North Korean people’s demands and need should be taken into consideration, not the North Korean government.

North Korea is saying no more fertilizer will come from foreign countries. That means they are no longer considering the fertilizer support from South Korea. They say approximately 25,000 tons of fertilizer was imported from China between last November and January of this year, which is 40 times more compared to last year. Nevertheless, this is far from enough, compared to what is required. The 300,000-350,000 tons of fertilizer a year South Korea supported, constituted two-thirds of the entire demand, and it was absolutely crucial to produce the annual increase of 600,000 tons. South Korea should not make the mistake of using humanitarian issues as a means for political fighting. Instead, they should take a firm stance against the North Korean political offense, and care for North Korean people. The North Korean government cares only about maintaining their moral superiority. This is a critical time, which determines the successfulness of farming for the year. The fertilizers should be going in now. We urge the South Korean government to make the right decision.

**[Investigative Report]**

**Election Result for the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly Shows Strengthened *Kim Jong Il* Power Structure**

The election of delegates to the Twelfth Supreme People’s Assembly has ended. Out of the 687 Assembly members, 46% are new delegates. Analysis of the composition of delegates shows an attempt to strengthen the *Kim Jong Il* power structure. Two points in particular stand out; the continuing legacy of revolution and the strengthening of the generational foundations.
Election District Number One went to Lee Eul-seol. Following him are Kim Young-bok and Kim Kyung-hee. The election of these individuals is representative of Kim Il Song’s direct power structure. Lee Eul-seol is one of the first generation of anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters commanded by Chairman Kim Il Song. He was the original commander of Kim Il Song’s Security Guards Unit. Kim Young-bok is also one of the original anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters. The positions of power were given based on the history of the veteran and his daughter Kim Kyung-hee, who fought together since Kim Il Song was the commanding general of the 6th Division. The assignments for the election district obviously symbolize an attempt to maintain the legacy of Kim Il Song. Originally, the assignment of election districts was not meant to be used for such symbolism.

However, on the occasion of this election, they assigned the election districts to those few remaining first generation fighters in an attempt to show the continued support for the legacy of revolution.

What is meant by “strengthening the generational foundations?”
Young officers with a rank of major general, who are graduates of the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Academy and are the 3rd generation of revolutionaries, have recently appeared in large numbers among the ranks of the politically ascendant. These officers are listed as members of the so-called “Baekdoo Mountain Faction” and are major generals or brigadier generals, such as Kim Kyung-soo, Kim Kwang-hyun, Kim Jung-gwan, Han Sang-soon, Kim Chang-sik, Lee Yung-chul and Kim Jin-chul. These are descendants of those entombed at the Tombs of Revolutionary Patriots and are a newly emerging political influence. These officers are the stabilizing element at the lower levels of the Kim Jong II power structure.

North Korea’s power structure consists of three layers; At the top is the 1st generation, the Kim Il Song generation. At the bottom is the 3rd generation. In the middle is the 2nd generation supporting Chairman Kim Jong-II. This categorization shows Kim Jong II’s power structure in a pyramid with the Baekdoo Mountain Faction as its base. The 2nd generation consists of 70 to 80 year-old Baekdoo Mountain revolutionaries, holding the real power within society. As Oh Geuk-yeol, former Minister of Military Operations, was promoted to be the Vice Chair of the National Defense Committee, he has risen to the top of the pyramid. Vice Chairman Oh is in fact the number two man after Chairman Kim Jong II. Kim Yung-choon, Minister of Defense, belongs to Vice Chairman Oh’s faction, and Oh Geuk-yeol - Kim Yung-choon’s faction has emerged as the major players.

Even though Jang Sung-taek was elected as a delegate, his older brother, Jang Sung-woo, Commander of Civil Defense, was not. It would be difficult; therefore, to consider Jang Sung-taek to be the number two man, as has been rumored. Rather, the election result reduced the influence of Jang Sung-taek and placed a constraint on him. Jang Sung-taek and Oh Geuk-yeol are not in a close relationship and outside rumors regarding their close relationship are not factually correct.
The experts in economics have not been entirely purged after their efforts to establish a strong nation. Those experts who served under Kim Il Song as premiers and ministers were placed as consultants to the ministry and later elected as delegates. This indicates that those experts in economics under Kim Il Song have been elevated once again. Kim Bok-sin, former vice premier for light industry under Kim Il Song has been re-elected. Kim Yoon-hyuk, former vice premier for industries and Bae Dal-joon, currently in charge of the Supervisory Agency of National Construction, has also been re-elected. These are the experts in economics who served under Kim Il Song as heads of departments or as vice ministers. Retention of these experts symbolizes maintenance of the former leader’s economic legacy as well as his political legacy.

The Department of South Korean Affairs within the Ministry of Unification Affairs has gone through a substantial replacement. Choi Seung-chul, the Vice Minister, Jung Woon-up, the Chairman of the National Economic Cooperation Committee, Vice Ministers Jun Kyung-nam and Kim Ryoong-sung, Kang Gwan-joo, and the Coordinator for External Affairs have been relieved of their posts. Kang Gwan-joo has received a penalty of six months without pay. He was in charge of the Agency for Korean Residents Abroad, and was found to have performed poorly in affairs regarding Korean residents abroad. In particular, he was reprimanded for his mistakes regarding Korean residents in Japan. Specifically, he was responsible for poor handling of the issues regarding Japanese citizens kidnapped to North Korea. Choi Seung-chul was found to have made mistakes in his overconfidence in the exchange program between the two Koreas. For example, he was overconfident in his belief that South Korea’s aid to North Korea would proceed without problems because of the many left-leaning South Koreans in South Korea. He is considered to have made a mistake in believing that the left-leaning elements in South Korea would support North Korea. The left-leaning elements in South Korea turned out not to be supporters of Kim Jong-Il. Secondly, there were many cases of corruption in the affairs of the North-South exchange program. The Changgwang Investigation Agency revealed this corruption through monitoring his family’s activities. The Agency traced money routes whenever one of his family members spent money in the foreign exchange shop. Choi Seung-chul’s career is ruined and the projects of the Ministry of Unification Affairs failed because of his overconfidence and corruption. Kim Yang-geun, Minister of Unifications Affairs, was appointed in June of 2007 and was found to not be responsible for the mistakes, and could stay on. Lee Jong-hyuk and Ahn Gyong-ho also remained at their positions.

The above are the brief conclusions that can be made about the election results of the twelfth-term delegates to the Supreme People’s Assembly.

There is an opinion that the delegates to the Supreme People’s Assembly are powerless and that the election is only a formality. What is to be noted, though, is that, depending on what the North Korean government tries to show the outside world, its composition changes. We should watch for what the Kim Jong-Il regime wants to show and what they try to highlight, domestically as well as internationally. This election result simply shows that “We are
maintaining our legacy of revolution, generation after generation. Chairman Kim Jong Il is alive and well. Kim Jong Il’s system will continue.”

There has been no mention of Kim Jong Il’s heir. In spite of outside enthusiasm, domestically, North Korea has no official answer to the problem. As confirmed earlier, they would rather show that Kim Jong Il’s system is alive and well, and try to strengthen their power structure. They would like to emphasize, “We treat our veterans well. Our generational foundations are solid. Kim Jong Il’s power structure is strong.” They try to emphasize that discussion of who will be Kim Jong Il’s heir is not the concern of this election, saying, “He is alive and well. What heir? Don’t ever mention that.” Discussion of Kim Jong Il’s heir could be interpreted as implying Kim Jong Il is giving up his power. There is no point raising a potential domestic confusion by discussing Kim Jong Il’s heir while they try to strengthen Chairman Kim’s power structure at this time. This is a way to show that the election of delegates to the Twelfth Supreme People’s Assembly is intended to strengthen Kim Jong Il’s power structure, not to select the heir to Chairman Kim Jong Il. ☑
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