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

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*Pyongsung* Wholesale Market to Be Closed
The Central Party has decided to close the _Pyongsung_ Market. Since January, North Korean authorities have been trying to close all the general markets and convert them to farmers’ markets. Due to considerable rural opposition to the policy, they decided to delay these transitions by six months. Currently, The _Pyongsung_ Market is the largest wholesale market in the nation. The decision to close the market was made on the assumption that if the largest market were to be closed, other markets around the country would begin to decline. In the meantime, the city of _Pyongsung_ has been reviewing plans to manage smaller markets in each of the city’s districts. This plan includes stricter restrictions on age eligibility for peddling permits. Additionally, Peddling permits will now be granted to the three poorest families from each neighborhood unit.

Rice Difficult to Come by in the *Pyongyang* Market
Due to restrictions forbidding the sale of rice, it is now extremely difficult to find the grain available anywhere in _Pyongyang_ Market. When peddlers are caught selling rice, their rice is confiscated, so no peddlers dare display it. The sale of corn and crushed maize are also currently forbidden, but other cereal grains, such as soybean and millet, can be sold. Consequently, peddlers have resorted to selling grain in secret and price of rice has begun
to fall. Last month in the Dangsang Dong Market of Mangyongdae District, rice sold for 2,100 NK Won per Kg, by early June it was selling for 1,700 NK Won. According to one party leader, there are three reasons why the price of rice is not going up during the month of June, which is generally considered a difficult month, like it did last year. First of all, government measures against the sale of rice are much more strictly enforced now than they have been in the past. Secondly, the movement of peddlers and their goods was severely restricted during the 150-day battle and they had little time to engage in commerce. Lastly most citizens have already spent all their savings over the difficult spring months, leaving them with far less purchasing power.

[Food]

**Pyongyang Central District Anticipating Disruptions In Food Distribution Starting July**

Up until June, the Pyongyang central district had distributed 15 days worth of food rations. The food rations are usually distributed twice a year, but due to recent food shortages, only the first half was delivered. It is difficult to make any forecasts for July; however, in the worst-case scenario, the city rationing office advised the people to provide for themselves starting in the second half of the year. An associate of the rationing office of the government informed that even if food is provided there is a great likelihood that it will be potatoes instead of rice, corn or flour. In the meantime, other neighboring districts have not received any food rations since months earlier than July. **Ham Mi-kyung** (38) who lives in Sunkyo District stated, “Residents of the central district store at least 6-months worth of food, but other districts are not that well off. Hence, the rations intended for the residents of the central district should be redistributed to the residents in the other districts.”

**Workers Of Pyongyang Fuel Distribution and Production Factory and Their Families Eat Porridge Despite Preferential Food Rations**

In Hwachung-dong, Seungho district in Pyongyang City, there is a fuel distribution and production factory under the guidance of the supporting office to the Bureau for Fuel Oil Control. Due to its association with the military unit, as well as to the fact that about 95% of its workers are discharged soldiers placed in their positions through personal connections, every month each worker receives full rations and an additional 15 days worth of rations are provided to their families. These rations are comprised of 40% rice and of 60% whole corn. However, despite the regularity and relative abundance of the rations the workers and their families barely have enough to eat. Due to the general poverty and low population in and around the area businesses are failing and the markets are weak. Residents usually raise domestic animals such as pigs and rabbits to provide for their families. Due to these circumstances, there are many households that eat only porridge. **Suh Mi-sook** (40s) said that they are more fortunate than workers in other factories, but their food situation is still not good enough because they are prohibited from engaging in business or side jobs. **Suh** added, “Because we received the food rations, we must abide by the strict regulations and work that is on a par with the army. My husband is exhausted because he only eats watery porridge for one or two meals a day when he needs to eat well.”
About 600 Party Members In Danchun City Are Free From Hunger
There are about 600 members in the four party committees at Danchun city in South Hamgyong Province. They include the City, Construction United, Mining and Railroad Parties, and its members range from the secretary to the officials in the Organization, Propaganda, and the Officials’ Departments. The members, along with police officers and security agents, belong to the upper class and are free of hunger. Since the City Party has the authority to regulate industry, agriculture, and fisheries in the region, priority in food distribution is given to the members of the Party. For example, the members receive food like oil, liquor, and soy sauce from the factories, varieties of fish from fishers, and grain from farmers. Likewise the officials of Construction United Party also take advantage of their positions and place themselves at top priority in receiving food supplies. So the officials are said to be the only people who survive the hunger. The remaining 60% of the population of Danchun city, however, survive on grass roots and tree bark, with some being fortunate enough to eat corn soup and noodles. Ordinary people complain about the officials’ selfishness saying, “The officials pursue their own interests. None of the officials care about the ordinary people nor are they sympathetic to our hunger.”

[Economy]
Cold Weather Damage In Several Mountainous Regions Of The Northern Hamgyong Province
On May 6 and 7, cold weather heavily damaged many crops in several mountainous regions including Leechun, Chulwon, and Hoeyang in Kangwon Province. The newly planted cornfields suffered much damage from the inclement weather. Some fields were converted to planting tofu beans because the corn buds did not sprout. Some areas in Northern Hamgyong Province were damaged by hail. Farms that had planted the corn in nutrition-rich complexes were barely affected, but the newly established farms and small private lands were damaged the most because the cold spring weather caused the seeds in the ground to freeze or rot. The farmers who had privately farmed in steep mountains found that almost 70%-80% of their corn crops did not sprout forcing the farmers to plant tofu beans instead.

The Completion of The First Transportation of Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer in Hoeryung
On the evening of May 31, Hoeryung city completed the first transportation of 1,250 tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer from the Heungnam Fertilizer Factory. On June 1, the fertilizer was distributed to individual farms in Hoeryung, and each farm received a bag of 50 kilograms of the fertilizer. During the distribution, the police conducted nightly patrols to prevent illegal leakage of the fertilizer. The farmers were glad that they were finally receiving the fertilizer; however, they returned to their farms concerned that the amount they received might not be enough.

[Politics]
"There Must Be No Defectors to China" during 150-Day Battle

On May 23rd, the officers of the Central Party went to Hoeryong City and instructed the people to reinforce the organizational control in a meeting where the officers of the City Party and Democratic Women’s Union (DWU) were gathered. The officers emphasized that the National Border Area will have to be especially careful so that there must be no defectors escaping to China during the 150-Day Battle. They said, “The ideological work must be reinforced during the 150 Day Battle so that women near the border area will not fantasize about China.” Furthermore, they warned that officers of the regional district offices, police officers, security agents, the Secretary of the Factory Party and the members of the DWU, would be strictly reprimanded, punished or dismissed from the party if any defectors escape.

The 4 Parties in Danchun City are Indifferent towards the Current Regional Issues

There are four Parties in Danchun City, South Hamgyong Province, including the City Party, Danchun Construction United Party, Danchun Mining United Party, and Danchun Railroad Sector Party. All three Parties other than the City Party belong to the Central Party or the Department of Railways. These Parties have been criticized for not attending to the current regional issues and only focusing on pleasing their superiors. For example, in the District of Danchun, there is a lot of focus on mining and construction-related industries. Therefore it is faced with more issues than other districts including environmental, construction, road, management of urban forest resources, and drinking water problems. These issues require intimate cooperation between the respective organizations, but in reality, such cooperation is not feasible. An official of the City Party said, “When an issue arises, people only assert their own opinions without making efforts to reach consensus because representatives of the parties do not want their party to be burdened with special taxes. As a result, nothing is accomplished. There are many problems such as security, construction, environmental, and hygiene problems, but only the troubled City Party is plagued with the problems, whereas the other parties show indifference. People remain as mere spectators to others’ problems; there are no changes being made and thus are falling behind. The City Party takes the initiative in resolving issues, but is, in fact, incapable of doing anything because of the lack of power and money.”

[Society]
Eunsan County Illegal Goldmine, Nobody Cares Even When Miners Die

There are many goldmines in Eunsan County. While most of the goldmines are dominated by the military, people with money are entering the closed mines and excavating gold. Before 1945, during the Japanese colonial period there were many vertical mines in Eunsan. The lengths of some vertical mines including the inclined shaft were approximately 250 to 500 meters. However, the mines were closed after Korea’s liberation from Japan because too many people lost their lives while excavating gold in the mines. Beginning in 2002, people with money started to enter the mines with the protection of Mine Security agents. They looked for people who have no family or relatives, wandering around looking for
moneymaking opportunities, and hired 10 to 15 people at a time to let them work in the goldmines. All the miners received were 6kg of ore with gold and three meals a day. It is a very lucrative business because people can make 10 to 15 thousand North Korean Won a day if they grind the ore and extract gold from the ore. However, their job is a very dangerous one because the pits of the mines were used before the liberation many years ago. Therefore, the safety is a vulnerable situation. Miners have to enter the mine and carry 40kg of gold ore in a backpack more than 10 times a day. Accidents involving death and injury occur frequently while transporting gold ore due to faulty equipment. Tunnels collapse from time to time. Usually about 10 to 15 people get involved in accidents in the span of a month. When accidents happen, the mine owners don’t bother to look for the miners trapped in the collapsed mine. The miners are people that come from various places with no personal references. So, they don’t bother to do anything because they can neither locate the family nor recover the dead bodies. Miners complain a lot, saying they are more viciously exploited than miners were during the Japanese colonial times. The police authorities in Eunsan are cracking down on those who operate illegal mines because of the high number of causalities, but did not avail. Meanwhile, the reported numbers of illegal mines, which are operating this way, have been found to be approximately 35 cases.

Residents of Sinuiju Complain over the Issue of Apartment Windows
The residents living near the number one street in Sinuiju North Pyongan Province are not very happy these days. This is because of the apartment windows. They have removed nyumchang (window frame made of aluminum), sujichang (plastic frame), and nahmoochang (wood frame), in the following order. Now, they are ordering to change the windows back to nyumchang, which fit the specifications. On May 22nd, another order was issued asking for the removal of the nyumchang again. The order was to dismantle them by the 26th. The residents are frustrated with this inconsistent changing policy. People say it is not easy to remove or put in a new window frame because it costs too much money. They followed the orders from the Party and replaced the frames numerous times and they are being told to do it again. So, they have complained and are asking which order is the right order to follow. The authorities issued a quick bluff in the case because of the bursting amount of complaints by saying, "Do not express any opinions. We will investigate and deport those who complain." They said they would hold an all-resident-meeting at 6 in the morning, and told residents that those who have not removed frames by the deadline will be evicted by force. Many people repressed their complaints and had begun dismantling the nyumchang. The reason for this inconsistent changing policy is due to the urban beatification project. It is the same in Pyongyang, but the border region and the number one street catches the eyes of visitors from outside. The windows made in the past were big enough to reveal everything inside. The windows with broken glasses were not repaired well so they were covered with vinyl. Therefore, the urban landscaping of the city was often harmed. Because of this, the authorities gave orders to make the windows smaller. In each region, the window dimensions were given out roughly. So, there were problems of misfits between the nyumchang frame, wood frame and the existing frame products. As such, another order
was issued to fix it. So far, this issue was raised several times, but it was not pushed through because it costs too much money. Recently, it is being strongly executed again.

“It is very hard to understand why we have to uninstall after spending so much money on installation”

Kang Ok-Lim, (40) sells stuff at the market sales booth located at Namsong Market, Sinuiju. She expressed her dumbfounded feelings on the order of dismantling the window frame. Mrs. Kang said “I feel very dumbfounded spending money on uninstalling window frames after spending so much money on installation”. Even though she faces many hardships in life, she paid 120 dollars on aluminum window frames and now uninstalling them makes her cry bitter tears. Ko Young-Hee (30s) who live at necessitous quarters, South Sinuiju also has expressed the feeling of dumbfounded. Mrs. Ko said “A while ago, they said not installing the window frame made it unqualified to live at the apartments. So, I installed wooden window frames by collecting money bit by bit. Now they are telling us to uninstall and I find it very exorbitant. I have eaten less to save in order to install window frames as they told me it’s a must, and now they are making us uninstall everything. How can this happen?” She said she doesn’t know why they have to bother the apartment residents so much. Some people raised a hubbub saying, “I will not uninstall my windows even if I may die until they give me the money to do it”.

Senior Veterans Mobilized for Disciplinary Teams

As the 150-day Battle goes on, the street control has started. Throughout the nation, police officers are controlling the street by questioning random people and cracking down alley sellers. Cracking down alley sellers did not stop them from selling their products, which resulted in mobilizing senior veterans who live nearby to form a squad called ‘senior veteran disciplinary team’. The reason behind forming the ‘senior veteran disciplinary team’ is they think if senior veterans talk, younger people will at least pretend to listen. However, most of members from the senior veteran disciplinary team are at a ripe age and it is hard for them to even stand properly. They frequently start dozing off under the shade of a tree shortly after standing for a while. When the police officers patrol around and see this and try to reproach, the senior veterans reply saying, “What can I do. Even my wife goes out to sell on the street when we lack food at home. How can I possibly stop them?” This makes the police officers feel disheartened.

Women/Children/Education

Rice Seeding on 150 pyong of Farmland was Assigned to Every Member of Democratic Women’s Union in Chungjin City

In Chungnam Dong, Sunam District, Chungjin City, every member in the lower braches of the Democratic Women’s Union (DWU) was assigned to do rice seeding on 150 pyong (0.1215 acre) of farmland. Typically, they only work in the morning, but had no choice but to work till 2 p.m. because of new 150-pyong assignment. Those who want to go out to peddle in the afternoon intentionally do the work very loosely in an attempt to finish early.
higher officers said, “You cannot deceive farm work and must do good work in rice seeding,” the situation has not improved at all. Rich women can get away from farm work by bribing officers with 3,000 North Korean Won. Even moms with suckling babies have to work in the farm if they don’t have money. Those babies have to spend time at a daycare center while their mom works in the farm. Moms have to come to the daycare center from time to time to feed their babies. Even elderly women over the age of 65, who are typically exempt from labor mobilization, have to work once a week. If they don’t want to work in the farm, they have to buy 1,500 NK Won worth of candies or cookies. On the other hand, the Labor department in Sunam District will have stricter guidance for women to avoid leaving them out from organized living patterns.

**Members of Democratic Women’s Union in Chungjin Mobilized in Making Graveyards**

Members of the Democratic Women’s Union in Chungjin were mobilized not only for farm work but also for making graveyards. Because there is no more space in Pyongyang National Cemetery, people outside Pyongyang will be buried in their hometown. In Chungjin, it has been decided that graveyards will be made in the leveled mountain in Nongpo. Therefore, members in DWU were mobilized from 6’o clock in the morning with lunch boxes. Most of them brought maize porridge as their lunch with a small number of exceptions bringing a steamed corn meal. They had to do foundation work with gravel till 8 p.m. No one can escape from the mobilization because it became part of 150-Day Battle. To get exempt from mobilization, they have to pay 3,000 NK Won. However, not too many women can prepare that much money. Jeong, Myung-Hee (pseudonym, 30s) said, “It seems that members in DWU were treated much more harshly and strictly than those with jobs. Because of this unfair treatment, most women want to get some kind of low-paying jobs.”

**[Accidents]**

**Diesel Sellers Robbed by the 9th Corps Soldiers Left Nearby Farm Damaged**

In the beginning of last June, an oil flood occurred in Yanghwa-ri, Shinpo City of South Hamgyong Province, seriously damaging the nearby farm fields. The accident happened when oil traders ran into soldier robbers on their way to Yanghwa-ri Fisheries Enterprise to sell oil. Four oil traders were going to Yanghwa-ri Fisheries Enterprise with a 23-ton, full tank of diesel. However, while passing through the Yanghwa-ri farm 1-ban district road, soldiers appeared out of nowhere, forced the truck to come to a halt, and demanded for 50kgs of diesel. When the oil sellers refused, the soldiers forced the driver and traders out of the truck and beat them violently one by one. They towed the tanker to the threshing floor of Yanghwa-ri 6-ban, and stole 6 tons of diesels by filling up every water bucket in sight. Then, the soldiers parked the truck and fled, leaving the tanker at the Naval Division Border Patrol Area located at Yanghwa-ri 5-ban. While running away, they left the pump on, resulting in about 17-tons of diesel to flow into the nearby paddy fields; about 13 units of the paddy fields were damaged by being covered in oil. Along with the oil, the burglars also got away with the truck’s tires and other automobile accessories. The oil sellers reported the incident to the police, but officers were slow to act upon hearing that soldiers were
involved. Although the thieves were identified as students from the 9th Corps automobile training school, no actions were pursued following this discovery. The victims were told that the investigation would continue so they should repair the tanker quickly and go back to Hyesan. According to the residents, the soldier robbers who ran away with stolen diesel gave 3 of the 6 tons of oil to the police station.

[Investigative Report]

[Correspondence from Pyongyang]

Production of Six Million Ton, Goal of 150-Day Battle
It has been one month since the 150-day battle started. On June 6th, which is the usual day for residents’ monthly general meetings, an extended general meeting of the primary party was called. This meeting featured enthusiastic members of Korean Farm Labor Union as instructed by the superior party. The meeting was guided by the county party secretary and was attended by the chairman of county cooperative management and neighboring li party secretaries. The meeting was held at the county conference hall and all the empty seats were filled with county workers. Everyone in attendance wore a solemn expression. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and pass a resolution that called for the production of six million tons of grain, as demanded by the party. The hope was that the meeting would provide workers with ideological motivation to encourage farm workers to increase their efforts for the next farm battle. For most of the meeting, not a single word of counter-criticism was uttered at the meeting and the entire time was spent repeating standard and motivational slogans. At one point though, the entire meeting was brought to a stunned silence by blunt statements made by a party member and veteran:

“If our farms are to achieve the goal of six million tons of grains, they would need to produce about 4.5 tons per Jungbo. That might have been possible during the 1970s, or even in the middle of 1980s, but since then haven’t production levels fallen to no more than 1.5 or 2 tons per Jungbo? Isn’t the problem obvious? Everyone knows that the lack of fertilizer is the problem. Why does everyone try to find other causes? Our farms have been fertilized with manure for the last ten years. We have spent a lot of manpower and money. Did it make a difference? Manpower has not been the problem and this year is no different. Everyone talks about, ‘Farmyard manure, farmyard manure, farmyard manure.’ Where are we supposed to get good farmyard manure? Isn’t that true that this county (Gangnam County, Pyongyang) does not any? The mountains don’t even have any trees left. Is it really surprising that the dirt from the mountains is no better than the dirt from the fields? Human excrement is limited. Dirt dredged from the bottom of the river would be good, but it is far away and we would need fuel we don’t have to get it here. We would need at least several hundreds of Jajooho truckloads.”

The county party secretary anxiously interjected, saying:
“Comrade, what you are saying is something everyone in this meeting already knows. What good is pointing out something we already know? The challenge is to find a solution. Instead of complaining, give us some solutions.”

I could not stand it any longer. I got up and said, “I have an alternative solution; Fertilizer issues should be addressed by the farming system. Shouldn’t we be helping the farmers? Farmers cannot solve these problems by themselves, can they? What happened to all the ammoniated fertilizers that were so popular in 1970s? If we can’t solve this problem, how can we expect the farmers to solve it by themselves?”

I added, “Comrade, what you have said is already known by the Party and the Cabinet, but the state is facing difficult times. That is why this problem remains. As you know, there is 150-day battle going on. If everything was going well, why would there be the need for a 150-day battle? If you are aware of the problem, why do you say things like this, as a member of the party? Please think about what is happening and stop complaining. Don’t we need to face these difficulties together? We should remain optimistic with all our hearts about our future, because if we do the gates to a strong and prosperous nation will be opened in 2012.”

Some in the audience applauded and cheered, “Yes, way to go!” Even though I had spoken, I am not really sure what the solutions to the problems we face are. Who can possibly solve this problem? Everyone knows there is no answer, so they just try to ignore it. This is the way it has been and, barring a miracle or unforeseen events, this is the way it will be for a long time to come.

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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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