[“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.]

[Hot Topics]
People Caring for Orphans Got Blamed
The Armed Forces Helped the Victims of a Fire without Appreciation from Party officials

[Food]
The Construction of Urang River Hydroelectric Dam Suspended Due to the Insufficient Food and Building Materials

[Economy]
An Operation Suspended until the End of October in Second Tunnel of the Kokyonwon Mine in Saebul County
The Purchasing Price of Korye Ginseng Increased Up To 140,000 NK Won
The Decrease of the Non-Absentee Rate at the Commodities Manufacturing Factory for Disabled Veterans, Hamheung, Because of a Food Shortage

[Politics]
National Environment Bureau Began Forest Investigation on June 20
The Department of Electricity and Manufacturing Meet to Provide Industrial Electricity during 150-Day Battle
Train inspectors Arrested for Overlooking Smuggling
[Society]
Accidental Patricide When Son Tried to Dissuade His Father From Complaining about Society

[Women/Children/Education]
Request to Unmarried Women to Marry “Disabled Veterans”

[Accidents]
Five Squid Fishermen Reported Missing
Part-time Fishing Boats have Accidents one after another in Fisheries Enterprise of Daeheung Trade Company

[Hot Topics]
People Caring for Orphans Got Blamed
In North Pyongan Province, Woonsan County, at a farm called Samsan Farm, a farmer took in orphans and cared for them like they were his own children. In July 2008, there were up to eleven orphans at the farm. The Youth Union members of the Armed Force Party helped build the orphans shelter and provided them with food. The other farmers, in contrast, do not like how they are helping these kids. The Union can just give orders but it is really because of the farmers that the Union is able to help the orphans. One of the farmers said, “If the farm doesn’t take good care of the orphans, every time the Union has a meeting they just scold the farmers. The farmers have already so much to do at the farm and to take care of orphans too brings up a lot of complaints.” As a result, “There are many people who take care of orphans for the money”.

The farm’s managers think that Kim Soon-Chul (alias), the farmer who cares for eleven orphans, is taking the orphans for money too. Up until the middle of April, seven out of the eleven kids ran away and became Kkotjebi; this is when parentless kids roam around begging for food, otherwise known as street kids. The farm’s Primary Party Secretary and the managers said to Kim, “The orphans you are caring for should be sent to an orphanage. You might as well take good care of your own kids instead”. Kim did not put the four kids that are left to the orphanage. He knew they were very young and he felt a special connection between him and the children. Then Kim said, “I don’t need the farm’s help, I can take care of these kids with my own strength and determination”. Some farmers who agree with Kim said, “People these days get lazy and angry if there is just one little thing that put burdens on them. People who do not help and care for the work Kim do laugh and look at him condescendingly. Nothing comes out of scolding those who do good deeds. People nowadays only think of themselves. Their sense of humanity has vanished. This is why the public and the government are so segregated”.

The Armed Forces Helped the Victims of a Fire without Appreciation from Party officials
On June 11th, a fire on a Collective Farm in Hong Won County in South Hamgyong Province, caused by a 5-year-old playing with fire, destroyed two houses of farmers working at the third unit.

A farmer, Jung Ran-hee (in her 30s, pseudonym) said, “The houses and even the distributed food were burned down in less than 30 minutes. In this busy farming season, most of the farmers are limited in their opportunity to provide assistance. Instead, they pass the burden to the working units.” The third working unit provided temporary living quarters in a storage room for the fire victims. They provided the Chosun Farmers Union tableware and blankets, and the rest of the third unit with 2kg of whole corn as emergency food. Additionally, from the 25th of June, the leader of the motor vehicle support bureau of the People’s Armed Forces in Hong Won County helped victims rebuild their houses, which impressed the farmers there. He believed building good relationships between the military and the people is the duty and purpose of the Military First Policy.

On the other hand, officials of the County Party thought the victims did not deserve assistance from the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces should not have helped them, especially when their primary concern should have been securing the portrait of the General Kim Jong-II, which the victims failed to save from the fire. The farmers, however, complain that officials of the Party only care about the portrait, and not the plight of victims. The farmers state, “The Armed forces were doing what collective farms are supposed to do but were neglecting. Whether the portrait was burned, the Armed Forces did what they should do. And the victims did not have any intention to burn it, which the Party officials never took into consideration.”

[Food]

The Construction of Urang River Hydroelectric Dam Suspended Due to the Insufficient Food and Building Materials

The construction of Urang River Hydroelectric Dam in North Hamgyong Province was temporarily suspended since June 15th. This resulted because the food was not supplied and the building materials were not secured in Gimchaek City, Gilju County, and Chungjin City in North Hamgyong Province. The battalions of these shock troop brigades are in immediate need of food. Hence, they are borrowing weekly food rations from the battalions of other regions. The commanders of these battalions whose food had already run out instructed the Support Bureau to “reduce the amount of distribution from 700g to 500g per day as the basic operations are not going forward due to the lack of food and building materials”.

Each workplace and public enterprise in Ranam area in Chungjin City are not sending the replacement labors even though the workers who were previously dispatched to the second company of the Urang River Hydroelectric Dam were working overtime. Several laborers, tired of waiting, went to the enterprise and argued with the officers about why they were not being replaced; those people were sentenced to two months in the municipal Re-education Center on last June 15th. The laborers who have watched the incident unanimously stated, “They argued with the officers because they were not being replaced on the due date, and the officers sent everyone to the Re-education Center. It is like saying
that the laborers must do whatever they were told to do without resisting, no matter how poor the officers manage the enterprise. It means that we were supposed to do what the party told us to do, which does not seem fair.”

Furthermore, on the afternoon of June 23\textsuperscript{rd}, the vice manager of the Provincial Party in North Hamgyong Province, sent to the shock troop brigade headquarters of the Urang River Hydroelectric Dam, instructed via telephone to the leading secretaries of the City Party Committee to “provide food, support supplies as well as working tools”. Also, the Provincial Party requested to put more effort on the completion of the Hydroelectric Dam construction in a meeting where each leading secretary of the City Parties and the related officials were gathered. The stated, “We must complete the construction of the Urang River Hydroelectric Dam within 150 days, or at the latest, within this 100 day battle which is about to start.” One of the officers in the Provincial Party expressed the underlying problem: “Once the construction of the Urang River Hydroelectric Dam is completed, our province is required to spend the electrical powers. However, the scale of the project is too big and the postage costs more than the goods. The construction is not progressing well because government support is lacking, not just in public works, but also in water turbine and power generation. The overall amount of power supply is not great, but the construction has become so big, so it is difficult for a local region to handle.”

\textbf{[Economy]}

\textbf{An Operation Suspended until the End of October in Second Tunnel of the Kokyonwon Mine in Saebul County}

A lot of water came out in the second tunnel (shift?) of the Kokyonwon Mine in Saebul County, North Hamgyong Province, and the production of coal is not feasible until the end of October. More water sprung from the ground in the second tunnel compared to the first and third tunnels. They need to scoop out the water using the water pumps, but the work is getting delayed because of electric power problems. The laborers of the first and third tunnels that are in operation to some extent received corn rations in early May, but the laborers of the second tunnel received nothing. Even if the laborers who did not receive a food distribution try to steal the coal and sell it, it is summer time and the demand for coal is low. One bucket of coal only costs 120 NK won. If 10 buckets of coals are sold, they will yield 1,200 NK won, which is not enough to buy even 1 kg of rice. Many miners buy a bottle of drinks (700 NK Won) with the money; get intoxicated to order to sleep, and go to work the next day, thus wasting their lives. The miners’ wives are making a living by crossing the river to China early enough or by climbing the mountain to cultivate small patches of land. However, it is even more difficult to procure food this year as the small patches of land were confiscated in eight out of 10 households pursuant to the forest protection plan announced by the government. The minors working the second tunnel whose operation was suspended are seriously worried. They are keeping a close eye on whether there will be food rations and ask, “Will there be no distribution if we cannot start production until the end of October?” Words are secretly spreading over the miners’ wives who said, “The women who crossed the river into China were the wise ones. I envy these women who
support their family members, parents, and siblings by earning money in China. It is difficult to live, and I hope I can cross the river into China as well.”

The Purchasing Price of Korye Ginseng Increased Up To 140,000 NK Won
One kilogram of Korye ginseng is purchased at the maximum price of 140,000 won at the Korye Herb Procurement Office in Kaesung. The ginseng extract is sold for 30,000 won. One Kaesung city official said the procurement price of the ginseng has been increasing because of disputes between different power groups.
The official explained about the complex ginseng business situation. “Manyun Jangsoo Company (an international trading company under the Department of Health) was supposed to collectively procure all of the ginseng. Through agencies, the company sells more than 80% of ginseng in Taiwan. However, the company only has the procurement right, not the right to grow the ginseng. The Kaesung City Party and the North Hamgyong Province Party have the right to grow the ginseng. The Central Party has been eyeing the ginseng business because it is lucrative. Daesung Trade Company under the Central Party was granted partial ginseng procurement rights. Since then, Manyun Jangsoo and Daesung have been competing to procure the ginseng. Since the North Hamgyong Province Party and the Kaesung City Party only grow the ginseng but do not have the procurement rights, which do not allow them to make money at all, they sell the ginseng by the kilogram to Chinese businessmen. Therefore, the three groups sell the ginseng. Moreover, the ginseng supply is low because of petty thieves and the decrease of ginseng production.”
He also added, “Manyun Jangsoo Company began to purchase ginseng from Northeast China and Russia and mix it with Korye ginseng despite its huge (several tons) contracts with agencies because the production of Korye ginseng was falling. Consequently, the medical effect of the mixed ginseng was not like that of Korye ginseng, decreasing the trust for the company. A small purchase of Korye ginseng by the Chinese works more effectively than the mixed ginseng. It was said that the Department of Health should be in charge of growing Korye ginseng, but it could not because the complexities of growing it. Manyun Jangsoo Company saw that the Korye ginseng extract business would be more profitable than the mixed ginseng business, so it has been researching the Korye ginseng extract project for more than seven years.

The Decrease of the Non–Absentee Rate at the Commodities Manufacturing Factory for Disabled Veterans, Hamheung, Because of a Food Shortage
During May and June the non-absentee rate at the commodities manufacturing factory for disabled veterans, Hamheung of the South Hamgyong Province, has been noticeably dropping. After a 10=day supply of food, a half bottle of corn oil, and other small commodities were distributed for the anniversary of the Foundation Day of Armed Forces on April 25, there was no more regular food distribution. Many disabled veterans do not come to work, protesting, “Provide basic necessities for us.” Many individual said, “The city should take appropriate measures for disabled veterans,” and poured into the city. The appeal, “Guarantee the basic life for disable veterans,” is also overflowing into the City People’s Committee.
One official said, “I don’t know how the factory became like this. When our great leader, *Kim Il-Sung*, was still alive, this factory was famous as the biggest one for disabled veterans. We worked as if we were a family and manufactured pencils and plastic bowls. Thanks to our great leader’s visit to the factory, the factory had received a special consideration from the nation regarding food distribution.” He also expressed his lamentation about the appeals, adding, “It really puzzles me why the factory faces such a situation in which it could not even get food distribution.”

**Politics**

**National Environment Bureau Began Forest Investigation on June 20**

The National Environment Bureau in the People’s Safety Agency began a forest investigation across the nation on June 20. One of its officials said, “We are going to check the patterns of tree planting and lumbering to make sure they are following the forestation plan.” This investigation focuses especially on the complete elimination of private farming on small patches of land. After examining the forest fires in the mountainous areas around *Hoeryoung* city in North *Hamgyong* Province, the Bureau is also planning to implement a forestation program. This investigation is planned to continue for 50 days, and the results will be reported to the Central Party’s Organization and Guidance Department. One of the forest managers said, “Eliminating private patch farming is difficult. We delegated the work to People’s Safety Agency (PSA) because we thought people would surrender only to those in the military uniform, but it doesn’t work. The PSA officers are reluctant to confront people because they need to get along with them. Giving a strict order in military uniform and trying to force them to quit private patch farming cannot solve the problem. The fundamental problem is people’s livelihood. If they don’t get proper food rations, eliminating private farming will certainly fail no matter how hard we investigate and regulate.”

**The Department of Electricity and Manufacturing Meet to Provide Industrial Electricity during 150-Day Battle**

The Department of Electricity and Manufacturing called its officials for a meeting in regard to the supply of electricity to industries on June 27. Participants included managers of The Office of Power Transmission and Distribution in each Province as well as managers of power plants. The resolution of the meeting was “to exhibit our best ability and technology and provide electricity unconditionally to (industrial) sectors that need power during the 150-Day Battle in order to build the Strong and Prosperous Nation.” The chairman of the meeting emphasized, “The factories and businesses in the military supply industry should have priority over the power supply, unconditionally and foremost.” On the other hand, there is no prospect of more power for ordinary people in the near future. The resolution of the meeting that day for general power supply was to install meters in households and provide electricity only to those who formally requested.

**Train inspectors Arrested for Overlooking Smuggling**
Five train inspectors in the train police office were arrested for overlooking smuggling operations and are under investigation in Gilju County, North Hamgyong Province. They received gold, bronze, and rare metals as a bribe to overlook their illicit sale in Hyesan. The bribery case was disclosed when three illicit smugglers were arrested by the public prosecutors station. They are expected to retire or be released from the office once the investigation is complete. Train inspectors near the border are responsible for blocking smuggling and inspecting illicit materials. However, they tend to be well off because they receive 100,000 NK Won for each smuggling case. The authority suggested that, “The inspectors should be changed quarterly or at least every 6 months.”

[Society]
Accidental Patricide When Son Tried to Dissuade His Father From Complaining about Society
Late last June, a son accidentally murdered his father in Ranam district in Chungjin city in North Hamgyong Province. Seungchul Han (alias, 60’s) while drinking with the father and son, explained how the accident happened.
“Dukchul Jang (alias, the father) is an employee of a printing factory and has a very straightforward and headstrong personality. On the day of the accident, there was a family gathering; it was Dukchul’s grandson’s first year birthday party, so I went to his son’s house. His children and relatives were at the event and he was drunk and complained about North Korean society. As the relative and his children tried to dissuade him from complaining about current social issues in his drunken state, he continued to lash out complaining, ‘I am not making up the stories and am I the only one who has these thoughts and opinions? Everybody knows and talks about it.’ The son and daughter-in-law and other children as well as the relatives, all asked and urged him to lie down and rest, but he didn’t listen and kept drinking. Since everybody around him urged him to stop drinking, Dukchul stated, “Everybody hates and does not like me so I am going home.” He then walked out the front gate. His first son escorted him and on the road Dukchul shouted loudly, “this is not a place and world for people to live, this is a fallen world!” His son immediately grabbed his father’s waist and hurried him back and forth to stop him. Dukchul continued to ignore his son’s warnings. So his son got impatient and took a stone on the side road and hit his father’s head. Only wanting his father to lose consciousness, he accidentally caused a fatal wound. Dukchul fell down on the side of the road. His body began to convulse, and then he blacked out. His son was shocked to watch his father, and immediately transported him to a hospital where his father passed away. The son had no intention of killing his father. Under the fearful watch of North Korean authorities, one must not speak loosely about society. Dukchul’s son’s intention was to dissuade his father from speaking out against society, which led to the accident.

[Women/Children/Education]
Request to Unmarried Women to Marry “Disabled Veterans”
Lately, Youth Union has been asking unmarried women “to marry disabled veterans.” Youth Union of Bukcheon County, South Hamgyong Province asked women who work for an
orchard to see if they would be willing to marry one when a disabled veteran grumbled about sufferings and difficulties of living by himself at the orchard. This veteran’s parents passed away a few years ago and he came back his hometown when he suffered a serious injury on his leg during his military service. Because he did not have any place to stay at his hometown, he used to live at a temporary quarter for bachelors on the farm. He visited a leading secretary of the County Party to complain about the difficulties of living at the quarter and requested a special treatment reserved for a disabled veteran. Thus, the Party built a house for him last May.

After getting a house, he went to the Party again to request them to introduce him to a woman who wants to marry him because he needed a woman who can take care of him as a partner. In this context, the Youth Union tried to help him, but no women seriously considered the urging by the Union. Kim Kwan-Sik (pseudonym in his 30s), a member of the Youth Union, said, “The Propaganda Department of the County Party and a secretary of Youth Union appealed to young women at the orchard for their beautiful sacrifice, but it didn’t work. When no woman stepped up to marry him, the wounded veteran caused a disturbance, saying, ‘I worked and sacrificed for this country. I got injured at the military. If I cannot find a wife, I would rather die.’” Mr. Kim felt sympathy about the difficulties of disabled veterans, but he confessed that there isn’t any way to help them in the real world. He said, “Many accidents occur at the military. Because it does not provide soldiers with appropriate safety devices at the construction field, many soldiers suffer injuries. When they get injured mentally or physically, the military does not provide any special treatments for them, so nobody wants to marry them. No matter how hard the authority tries, no woman would agree.”

[Accidents]

Five Squid Fishermen Reported Missing
On June 28th in Bangjin Fisheries Enterprise of North Hamgyong Province, Chungjin City, Chungam District, five daily laborers working as squid fishermen took off to the sea at 3:00 P.M. No contact was made afterwards. Soon, other fishermen under the Daeheng Bureau of Hamheung City found a small piece of a wrecked boat, but they couldn’t confirm if it was the boat they were looking for. July came and went, but there’s still no trace of their boat or their bodies. The police authority is now suspecting that the five fishermen may have run away to South Korea, like many have attempted in the past.

Part-time Fishing Boats have Accidents one after another in Fisheries Enterprise of Daheung Trade Company
At the end of June, a part-time fishing boat of Fisheries Enterprise of Daheung Trade Company, Oongjin County, South Hwanghae Province (belonging to Central Party No.38, party funds making enterprise) had an accident and sank under the waves while sand lance fishing. Only two of eight crewmembers survived. Those who met with the accident were well known for their superb sand lance fishing for over 18 years. Ironically, the day they had the accident was the same day in which they caught the most amount of sand lance since 1992. Originally, the boat’s maximum load is 12 ton. But on that day,
the crew loaded their boat with 17 tons of catch. The boat sank due to engine failure while returning. Fisheries Enterprise executives expressed sorrow that the crews probably died because they were blinded by vain greed.

Echinoid Fisheries Enterprise of Daeheung Trade Company, Hamheung City, South Hamgyong Province also had an accident. Last June 20, an echinoid-fishing diver died because he didn’t receive proper oxygen supply while diving. When the oxygen supply device broke down, they should have manually cranked up the oxygen pump. But the boat didn’t have any manual oxygen pump on board. Because of this accident, the worker who was in charge of the exhaust pipe was blamed for the accident and arrested. One executive described these accidents as out-of-the-norm for Daeheung Trade Company. He said, “Daeheung Trade Company has a reputation for good equipment and guaranteed living, as compared with others. These kinds of accidents have been very rare. So I was shocked when I heard of these accidents happening recently. I am concerned that these might point to a management lapse in the company.”

for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees

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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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