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

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[Hot Topics]
A Former Leader’s Exemplary Leadership Results in Joo–won Coalmine’s Record Output
The Central Party dispatched its current officials (former leaders) to each region of North Korea during the 150-day battle to increase worker productivity. One of the officials sent to the Joo-won coal mine drew attention from the media for his exceptional accomplishments. To accomplish the rebuilding of the railway which was destroyed during the Arduous March (the massive famine of the mid-1990s), he took the initiative for the felling of trees necessary for the manufacture of railroad ties, organized recreational events for worker breaks, and distributed food and snacks sent to him by his family. Once the railroad ties were available, he urged the Onsung County Party, the neighborhood unit, and the schools to help rebuild the railroad. In less than two months he achieved phenomenal success of reopening the railroad which had not been in operation for nine years. He also encouraged and counseled the coal miners, and tried to solve the problems they faced. These actions resulted in the coal mine’s largest output in nine years. Residents of the area near the coal mine said, “His efforts alone are impressive enough, but we would be a strong and prosperous nation if every official worked like he does.”

Construction Laborers Fight With Supervisors Ending in Mass Strike at Eorangchun
Last June 10, a mass strike started after a fight of construction laborers with work supervisors at a road construction site at Eorangchun, North Hamgyong Province. Due to food shortage, laborers at the site were fed a bowl of steamed corn meal, a bowl of soup and a few pickles of radish. On the other hand, the site supervisors enjoyed pork, rice and alcoholic beverages provided by the enterprises mobilized in the road construction. The laborers kept silent even though they felt the supervisors were overly consuming food and supplies while mostly idling time away. One day one of supervisors got drunk and cursed at
some laborers taking a break. It caused an explosion of suppressed anger on the part of the laborers. A laborer named Cho Dong-Soo (alias) challenged the supervisor, “How come you people fill your stomachs with alcoholic beverage and pork while idling away time and yet shout at us? We feel so hungry and weak in this hot weather. Don’t we deserve some rest?” The supervisor’s response was, “Who do you think you are talking back to?” and he slapped the face of the laborer. It triggered a big fight between two supervisors and laborers. The supervisors were beaten badly by numerous laborers. The local headquarters found out about the fight, held a meeting and made a decision to punish the laborers. The laborers involved in the fight were criticized in public and placed in isolation for a week. The laborers felt that they were wronged because the supervisors caused the incident. The angry laborers protested for two days with work stoppage. The local headquarters were stunned and requested their superior organization to suppress the strike. The superior organization dispatched inspectors to find details about the incidents. The superior organization ended up criticizing the local headquarters and trying to calm down the angry laborers. The whole incident came to an end when the site supervisors apologized to the laborers in public.

**Security Agents, “Blind with Money”, Cause Death to an Elderly Woman with Threats and Severe Beating**

Last July 10, an elderly woman died after two days of interrogation at the security agency of Joowon Mine, Onsung County, North Hamgyong Province. She is the wife of Ji Chul-Sam (67). The tragedy occurred because she refused to give up 1,500 Yuan her daughter sent from China to security agent, Min Yung-Sik. Later investigation revealed that she died of heart failure caused by threats and severe beating by the security agent, Min Yung-Sik. He filed a false report upon the death of the elderly woman saying that ‘she committed suicide by hanging herself with a telephone wire in her cell while he was in the restroom.” However, public sentiment turned bad during her funeral. Finally the county and the province had to get involved and they performed an autopsy. Two officers from the province, an officer from the county and a family member witnessed the autopsy. The result of the autopsy revealed that the dead woman’s brain contained a blood clot as big as two fistfuls and another blood clot inside the chest. Residents were stunned at this revelation. There were numerous lamentations, “How could this kind of act be revealed if it had not been for complaints or public opinion? The world has turned only for the wealthy or powerful.” The only reason why the death of the woman has become a big problem in the first place was because the woman is a descendant of a revolutionary fighter. There are a lot of cries of criticism, such as, “Now is the time to kick the security agent, Min Yung-Sik out. He has become blind with money and that caused this tragedy.” People also insist that “There are three more vicious guys like Min Yung-Sik. This is a good time to wipe out bugs like those.”

**Money Earned in “Bone-Shattering Struggles” Gone in a Flash**

The following is a real story about a man who had crossed the river to China to find means to feed his family and came back.

“I spent the last year and a half in Hwaryong, China and saved 7,000 Yuan. I could barely come back home to see my family in January 2009. What I had in mind when I came back
was that I would exchange the Chinese currency with North Korean money and I could start a small business to feed my family.

What I found out at home was really depressing. There was not anything bright. I expected my son to have grown up so that I could not recognize him. But in reality he has not grown up in size. Physically he was as small as he was a year and a half ago. He just looked at me wondering who I was. My wife has turned a really old woman due to hard life, but tearfully welcomed my return.

Upon my return, the most urgent thing was to get rice. Only food left in the house was a half bowl of ground corncob mixed with other vegetables. I took my wife to the market to buy some grain. I had to disguise myself in old clothes. It was January, and the price of rice was 1,650 NK won per Kg and corn was 550 NK won.

Time was passing by fast, and I felt impatient. I wanted to move quickly and start the business I had in mind. But inspections by the security agency and the police departments were more frequent. On January 15, I went to the markets at Sariwon, North Hwanghae Province, to buy some Korean shoes, rice, calendars and other essentials. Onsung market has plenty of these items brought from Sariwon. I struggled about half a month and came back to Onsung with two packages on February 2.

On the way to Onsung, someone must have recognized me. The person told the police on me and our house was raided by police. I was forced to hide myself in the mountain. I came back home to live with my family of my parents and my wife. The sights of policemen trying to catch me broke my heart.

Eventually I got caught on February 12 by police who followed my wife carrying food for me. I was taken to the security agency and detained in an empty cell. Several hours later, the agent in charge came in and asked me take out everything I owned. They were a lighter, a pack of Korean cigarettes and 200 Yuan. Just in case, I did not carry much on me. A while later, Min Yung-Sik, the agent in charge of my neighborhood unit, took me to his room. He is infamous with torture. He threatened, ‘We know that you have been to China. Tell us everything.’ I tried to look as natural as possible and said, ‘I visited home of my father’s sister in Hwanghae Province.’ After several attempts to make me confess, he handed me a few sheets of paper and a pen, and said, ‘If you honestly confess, you will be fully forgiven. If you viciously resist, nothing good will ever come out of this. Think hard.’ I refused to give in and kept insisting that I had visited Hwanghae Province. I was willing to endure any suffering because any wrong words would finish my life, my wife and even children. I kept saying, ‘How is it possible that you people treat me as a criminal? I just went to Hwanghae Province to borrow money to survive when there is no food ration or no wage.’ They, then, forced me kneel down on the floor and started beating me. They kicked with their feet. They used their fists. They kicked my abdomen and I could not breathe. They even used a hammer they found on top of the cabinet. Their continued to torture made me until I lost consciousness. I could faintly hear the sound of beating on my body and them shouting, ‘Confess!’ This continued a day and a night. On the second day around four in the morning, they did not get anything, and they allowed me sleep. I remember seeing a scene of torture on Chosun Central TV and Rodong Shinmun by U.S. imperialists in a camp near Cuba. U.S. imperialists burned the prisoners, placed the prisoner in icy cold water, cut their ears and did numerous beastly tortures on them. My real experience tells me there is no
difference between such U.S. imperialists and our country, which claimed to be the best on this earth, where the people are supposed to be the owners. Why do they treat people like this? My wife made an arrangement with a person to visit me. He was an elderly man, who retired as a lawyer less than a year ago. He asked Min Yung-Sik whether he could do a favor as if I confessed honestly. He then later suggested me to give bribe to Min Yung-Sik in whisper. I thought about it a while and asked my wife to bring the balance of 4,000 Yuan and gave it to Min Yungsik. He then said, “the 4,000 Yuan saved your life. Even 40,000 Yuan could not solve this kind of crime these days. The elderly man’s signature for me as security witness saved my life. The money I saved in China by bone-shattering struggles is gone in a flash. Alas! So vicious is the world. I just cried and cried.”

[Food]

Concerns Over Food Shortages for the Special Labor Brigade at Hoecheon Power Plant in Jagang Province
The Central Party and cabinet leaders held a meeting on August 7th in order to administer the distribution of material goods and food rations to the Hoecheon power plant construction site in Jagang Province. The sudden discontinuation of the flow of food and supplies to the site has now become the focus of the workers. Deliveries of food were rerouted in favor of the military rather than the Special Labor Brigade, mobilized by social institutions and organizations, with the latter receiving only one ear of corn per meal from July 25th to August 4th. The Central Party and ministry officials reported that “the Support Bureau officials need to fulfill their duties and take the initiative to secure food quickly.” They also stressed the responsibility of Support Bureau officials, saying that “Those who would only supply the Special Labor Brigade with corn and corn porridge are unqualified for their positions.”

Food Distribution Long Discontinued in Eunduk County, North Hamgyong Province
The “July 7th Factory” which produces ammunition in Eunduk, North Hamgyong has gone without supplies of food for all of August. Residents of the Obong Coal Mine Labor District have also run out of food and 30% of the district’s population survives on porridge alone. Roughly half of the residents in Eunduk County overall face difficulties in getting food.

[Economy]

Food Crisis Will Double in Severity by 2010
Last August, the Agriculture Department called on officials from every city charged with the planning of farm management and responsible for the year’s harvest for an overall status report. They compared their harvests to the prior year to determine whether the new varieties of corn, rice used in the current year have had any impact on harvest yields. The results showed that many farms were affected by water damage and were experiencing a crop season that was worse than the previous year. Based on this trend alone the farmers determined that the food crisis could double in severity by next year.
Severity of Punishment for Harvest Related Infringements Heightened Due to the Food Crisis
The provinces of South Pyongan, North and South Hamgyong called upon an open General Assembly meeting to deal with harvest related infringements. At the meeting, officials assented to canceling party membership of any party member who is guilty of committing harvest related violations; and based on the severity of the violation would either be sent to the Labor Training Center or be executed while their families would be deported. The same punishment will apply to normal workers. The new decree was disseminated to workers, Democratic Women’s Unions at the factories and enterprises and students at the professional college level to even the pre-schools. People are concerned that such a decree was necessary in the first place and wondered about the severity of their nation’s food crisis.

Food Crisis in 2010 to be Exacerbated by Drought this Year
A reduction in the year’s harvest is expected at the collective farms in North Hamgyong Province due to this year’s drought. According to the survey put out by the Provincial Agricultural Department, 3,200 jungbo of corn fields and 1,600 jungbo of fields growing other crops were dehydrated due to insufficient rain fall and affected the successful harvest of these crops. On August 7th, the Provincial Agricultural Department organized a response team to address the impact of the drought, but they only managed to conduct a survey of the current damages without producing any coping strategies. The damages in the southern regions such as the South Pyongan, South Hamgyong, and Hwanghae provinces are reported to be two to three times more serious than that of North Hamgyong Province. Council meetings were held at each of the provinces all expressing concerns over the current crisis: “To build our nation into a strong and prosperous state, first and foremost we need food. However, the crop situation this year is extremely bad, and we cannot avoid higher food prices in 2010.” Many anticipated that the seriousness of the rise in food prices next year will surpass that of the current year. Some foresaw a grim future ahead saying, “It is extremely hard to deal with a food crisis that is caused by poor domestic harvest.” Officials also admitted that the deterioration of trade relations with China has made it impossible to import large amounts of food. Many expressed their hopelessness, “Due to the bad harvest, we will not be able to get out of this food crisis to build a strong and prosperous nation.”

Street Vendors Complain about Increased Control over Business
On August 2nd at around 5:00 p.m., a violent incident took place in front of a busy market in Onsung, North Hamgyong Province. Since the start of the 150-day battle, the market has opened at 4 p.m.; however food vendors were prohibited from entering the market place because of a new order restricting the sale of food items. Some tried to sell food unsuccessfully in small alleyways, which failed to provide the traffic needed to run a sustainable business. So many vendors gathered around the gate of the market place and tried to sell there.
On the day of the incident, there were around 70 vendors selling food at the gates of the marketplace when police officers raided them from all corners. The officers were determined to crack down on these vendors because they felt they have given them enough warnings and dismissals to no avail. The vendors dispersed to escape the law enforcers some running with food containers in their hands, others pushing food carts, and some even falling in the street with food spilt all over them. Some have compared the event to a flock of hens being RAIDED by wolves. Vendors who were not fast enough to escape the police got their merchandise confiscated. Some refused to give up their food items, resisting vehemently while being beaten on the ground. Some retorted and even cursed at the police officers calling them “sons of bitches”. Only a few who were very quick to escape were able to run away with their goods intact. The police officers confiscated merchandise, but did not arrest any of the vendors. However, the police chief who led the raid reiterated his warning, “If anyone violates this order, they will have their goods confiscate upon sight.”

Vendors who had their merchandise confiscated followed the police officers until late at night, asking and begging them to be returned, however in vain. Some even tried to bribe the officers with whom they had personal acquaintances and tried to appeal to them to get their items back, but it was already too late. Vendors who lost all of their sales items expressed their frustration and despair to the police officers they knew personally. “Why are they doing this to us? They have not provided us with either food rations or salary, and yet they prevent us from trying to survive on our own! How can we live then? What do they want us to do? If we had sufficient food, we wouldn’t have done this. Say something. How should we live?”

Some older ladies went to the provincial party early the next day and made a request to have their goods returned to them and to allow them to continue selling food. However, their voices were not heard. There was so much despair that some screamed and shouted, “If you guys abided by the laws and the rules, we wouldn’t have to live like this! Open your eyes and see exactly what’s happening on every corner of streets!” Vendors selling in the market also appealed to the officers of the Provincial Party about the arbitrary fines and charges brought against them by the police officers who are plainly stealing from the people.

[Politics]

August Policies of the Central Party

Due to a poor harvest, officials of the principal breadbasket provinces of South Hwanghae and South Pyongan have examined agricultural conditions and reported the estimated crop totals for the year to the Central Party. Upon receiving the report, the Central Party enacted policies upon the Department of Agriculture’s officers in order to promote a more plentiful harvest and ensure that the People’s Army would be provided for first if supplies are inadequate.

On August 20th, North Korean authorities sent notice to every domestic and foreign worker of the party that they are completely refusing the UN Security Council’s Resolution on imposing sanctions on North Korea.
As a guideline, the Party instructed its members to follow the founding principles laid out by the Three Generals of Mt. Baekdu, and accordingly, party members arranged for a meeting to take place. There, it is expected they will set individual resolutions for the 150-day battle and rally in order to realize their goals. Each person must set up a comprehensive plan with daily, weekly and monthly goals in both ideological and administrative work.

On August 28th, ideas were in development for business and liberal arts education projects in commemoration of Youth Day.

**Regional High-Ranking Officers Being Investigated on Charges of Drug Trafficking**

City and provincial public prosecuting stations are conducting a nationwide investigation on drug trafficking, focusing on high-ranking officers in each region. A specialized task force was recently established in Public Prosecutors Station No.4 for those purposes. Once officers are under suspicion of having any connections with drug traffickers, the task force will immediately make an arrest and escort them directly to the provincial public prosecutors station without going through the police and respective local public prosecutors station. Consequently, judicial officers of the region are also being included in the investigation. Principal offenders who were apprehended for organizing drug trafficking in Sariwon, North Hwanghae Province will be executed after the plenary meeting for the 150-day battle. Other criminals will be sent to the Labor Education Center for life or sentenced to at least ten years. Law enforcement officers such as City Party officers, police officers, and public prosecutors who were guilty of involvement with drug trafficking were arrested one after another as major drug crime lords were arrested. These officials are dismissed from their positions or demoted to laborers.

**[Society] Hambak Houses (Cheap boardinghouses) Flourishing in Boojon County South Hamgyong Province**

Boojun County in the South Hamgyong Province is the gathering place for the most destitute people in North Korea. Originally, along with Jangjin County, it was a place where exiled officials were sent. Today it is the gathering place for homeless people. Recently, a high-ranking official issued an order to send the homeless back to their hometowns, and the homeless were transported to Hamheung. However, instead of returning home, they kept returning to Boojun, and the police soon gave up. Some homeless people bribe the police with cigarettes and plead with them to not send them away. In return, the police tell them to stay out of trouble. Even though Boojun County is a poor area, many people come to live here because there is less governmental control and tax imposed. Moreover, there are profitable goldmines and many Hambak Houses in Boojun County. Hambak houses, which date back to Japanese colonial period, are boarding houses for homeless people where they can stay overnight on credit. About 20 to 30 people sleep in one house and provide their own meals. They pay the lodging fees when they have money. Some wealthy people come to Hambak houses to hire day laborers who then return to Hambak houses at night to sleep. Boojun is about an hour drive from Hamheung, and many homeless families who wonder around the South Hamgyong Province area come here.
Average lodging fee is about 100 to 150 NK won. The owners of Hambak houses only allow strong, healthy people to stay in their houses, because they believe sick, weak people will only take up space without being able to pay. Occasionally, families would come to Hambak houses, and the younger children and elderly will stay while husbands and grown children work during the day. The residents say, “Despite the propaganda that we are a socialist country, it looks like the days of Japanese colonial period are coming back. The only difference is that there are no Japanese.”

Farmers in Boojun County Produce Potatoes to Barter with Corns
Boojun County in the South Hamgyong Province specializes in potato farming. Each farm has its own production target, and rations are not given if it does not meet its target, making it a very tough place to live. As such, those who are exiled from the South as well as the North Hamgyong Provinces are sent here. Since the early 1990s, the residents here have never properly received potato rations because they were unable meet their targets. Even the farms do not bother to give rations to the powerless farmers. The residents are now putting more effort into cultivating small individual lots to supplement their own food supply. They do not even consider planting corn since it is difficult to grow. Rather, they trade what little potatoes they cultivate for corn.

Newlyweds Avoid Having Children Due to Difficult Living Circumstances
Lately, newlyweds are avoiding having children due to destitute living conditions. Park Chan-Hyuk (alias), who lives in Ranam District, Chungjin City, in the North Hamgyong Province, has been married for about five years but does not have any children. When the couple wed, they planned to have children after they became financially stable. However, despite both of them working full-time jobs, their lives are only becoming increasingly difficult. As such, they do not have any children yet. Currently, families with three children can receive government assistance of 500 NK won for each child and are exempted from labor support duty and taxation. However, the subsidy is too small to cover the costs of raising children. Therefore, having children is out of the question for many couples who are barely getting by. On the contrary, the wealthy and government officials are able to have many children, reflecting a gap between the rich and poor even in the area of having children.

News of Allowing Pyongyang Women to wear Pants Causes Stir
Local government officials were greatly astonished at the news allowing the women in Pyongyang to wear pants. The news caused much stir, with some declaring, “This is a great decision. A news that is equal, if not greater, than that of an open reformation.” They also joked, “Maybe next will be an open-door policy!” The news of allowing women to wear pants came as a refreshing shock to many.

[Women/Children/Education]
Kkotjebi Children of a Youth Unit Fought against Officials’ Unreasonable Treatment
Chulwon County and Pyonggang County of Kangwon Province chose children who were old enough to work out of the group of Kkotjebi children whose parents died or went missing and sent them to the farm in 2007. These children have become members of Youth Units and work for the farm, but they do not receive cash distribution appropriately at the settlement of accounts last year because the officials of the farm bilked more than half of these children’s shares. Even in this context children did not complain. However, on July 29th when there was a downpour in the area, the cornfield of the Youth Units got damaged and it became hard to harvest the expected amount of grains. The farm officials blamed these children for the damage, saying “Why didn’t you prepare for the rain?” and threatened them saying, “We will cut your working days and efforts at the final calculation at the end of the year.” Finally, these children became upset and complained to officials about the unfair treatment, saying “This is not reasonable. Give us our shares that we have not received so far.” At this complaint, the manager of Farm Management Council let a secretary of Li Youth Units give a strong Fight for Ideology Meeting to these children. The secretary called these children together at the Ideology classroom and brutally beat the four most rebellious children and the children became angry and attacked the secretary. The beaten secretary was sent to the hospital immediately. Twenty Kkotjebi children ran away on the same day. Out of 27 Kkotjebi children in the Youth Units, 20 children ran away, so the farm ran into big trouble. Finally, the County Party raised an issue about this incident. The Party criticized farm officials by saying “You are so mean and manage the farm very poorly, and you discourage the children to fit in at work and finally kick them out.” The County Party reported this incident to the Province Party and suggested to fire the farm officials.

[Accidents]

Security Guards who Beat and Killed a Laborer Stealing Corn Arrested

Last July 30th, Lee Sung-Nam (alias) from Eunsan-eup, Eunsan County of South Pyongan Province was coming back from working at daikon field of Collective Farm. He stole 5 corns from the corn field. However, the farm security guards caught and beat him brutally and tied him on a post in the security quarter for 11 hours resulting in his death. The scared guards put his dead body on an ox cart and dumped it at a nearby cornfield. The corpse was found three days after the incident on August 2nd. A middle school student who witnessed the beating reported the incident and the security guards were arrested last 8th.
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Good Friends provides relief works for international refugees to become all lives’ friends, peace movement to fundamentally resolve disputes and conflicts that human beings face, and human rights movement to protect human rights

Good Friends has been providing information on food shortages in North Korea, raising funds for humanitarian assistance, dispatching activists to national border areas between China and DPRK and having them investigate local situations, and publishing reports on food shortages in North Korea.

Now Good Friends USA intends to improve humanitarian and human rights situation of North Korean residents and to inform this situation to the international community by

1) collecting information on severe food shortages and bad situations in health, education, and transportation and providing them to other humanitarian aids organizations so that they can support North Korean people effectively.
2) investigating current situations of North Korean refugees in China, and providing protections and aid for them.
3) assessing human rights violations occurring in North Korea, informing international communities, and requesting that the North Korean government act to improve human rights and living conditions.

Also, Good Friends USA publishes the newsletter North Korea Today (English edition) to inform the international public.

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