“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.

[Hot Topics]
Note: The Hot Topics of No. 307 were published ahead of time as a separate edition.

[Food]
National Grain Price Declined Dramatically after Harvest

_Buryung_ County Focuses on Growing Medicinal Herbs rather than Farming

_Buryung_ County Fires Farming Laborers for Scanty Harvest

[Economy]
Confiscation and Incineration of South Korean Clothes
Pharmaceutical Factories in _Hamheung_ City Sell Medicine in the Black Market
In _Shinyang_ County, the Families of County Party Officials Live a Privileged Life

[Politics]
Reinforcement of the Reporting System for the Residents Living Near the Inter-Korean Border (the Armistice Line) in _Jangyeon_ County
The Number of Defectors is Not High This Year, But Most of Them Are Party Members
Follow-up Investigation Strengthened Due to the Increased Number of Defectors

[Society]
_Gimchaek_ City, Young People from Poor Households Are the Only Ones Volunteering for Mt. _Baekdo_ Power Plant Construction
No Outside Aid for Nursing Homes in Wonsan-ri, Hoeryong City

[Women/Children/Education]
Hoeyang Middle School Designated as an Exemplary Physical Education School
Middle School Instructs Students to Buy Gym Suit for Nomination as an “Exemplary Physical Education School”

[Accidents]
Pyongsung – Chungjin, Railroad Blocked for 5 Days Due to Train Accident

[Food]
National Grain Price Declined Dramatically after Harvest
National grain price have declined dramatically after the harvest season. The price for rice in early September reached its highest at 2,500 NK Won. However, as of November 4th the price has significantly decreased to 1,700 – 1,800 NK Won. Even corn, which was priced around 1,100 NK Won is now under 800 NK Won. As of early November, the food prices are the highest in Chungjin and Hamheung areas and the lowest in Heaju.

<Table 1> Nation-wide rice price for major cities from September to November
(Unit: NK Won/kg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Date</th>
<th>9/20</th>
<th>10/10</th>
<th>11/04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamheung</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyongsung</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonsan</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haeju</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>1,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sariwon</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<Table 2> Nation-wide corn price in major cities from September to November
(Unit: NK Won/kg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Date</th>
<th>9/20</th>
<th>10/10</th>
<th>11/04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamheung</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyongsung</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonsan</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haeju</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sariwon</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buryung County Focuses on Growing Medicinal Herbs rather than Farming
Buryung County, which is located in the high attitude of the North Hamgyoung province, has small, unsuitable land for farming. Even though they raise corn, the corn farming is not expected to do well this year due to shortage of fertilizer. The farmers experienced food shortage last year as well as this year. The farmers are worried that they might not even be able to afford porridge next year. Min Kwan Kim (alias) recalls, “This is the first year in my 80 years that I have experienced such bad corn farming.” As a result, Buryung County farmers are turning to growing medicinal herbs rather than
traditional farming. *Buryung* County is known as one of the best places to grow herbs even without fertilizing. The farmers are able to earn some living since the government purchases the herbs from the farmers. Because the farming is not good this year, increasing number of farmers are growing a variety of mushrooms and herbs.

**Buryung County Fires Farming Laborers for Scanty Harvest**
The Committee of Armed forced party of *Buryung* County in the North *Hamgyong* Province criticized the division party secretary and farm managers for lack of their qualification and fired them. The Committee then replaced them with qualified laborers. The new laborers, however, only went to their assigned places only after the party vituperated and forced them to go to the place. A laborer complained, “The farming did not fail because the farmers were lazy or the officials lacked the ability. For good farming, there must not only be good weather but also good fertilizer. However, the Farm Resource Provision Unit of the Province Farming Management Commission did not provide sufficient amount of fertilizer to *Buryung* County because they deemed this place unfit for farming. Yet when the farming fails and crop yield decreases, we are criticized harshly during the meeting of the County Party. Would that make you want to go the place?”

**[Economy]**
**Confiscation and Incineration of South Korean Clothes**
On September 30, it was uncovered that companies affiliated with the *Pyongyang* City Trade Bureau have illegally sold and distributed South Korean ready-made clothes. Children’s clothing, men and women’s clothing, and underwear were sold to various stores in cities such as *Pyongyang, Pyongsung, Sariwon, Haeju,* and *Wonsan.* On charges of selling the South Korean clothes, CEOs and directors of the trading companies, and even those Trade Bureau workers who overlooked the sales were arrested. South Korean products can only be legally traded through the *Samchunri* trading company. Beyond that, South Korean products are forbidden to be imported through China or other third countries. If sellers took off South Korean labels from the clothes before selling them, they would not have been caught. The Central Party ordered each of the cities to withdraw and incinerate the confiscated South Korean clothes. The Central Party assured officials that they would not be responsible even if people protest.

**Pharmaceutical Factories in *Hamheung* City Sell Medicine in the Black Market**
Even during the 150-day fight period, there was high absenteeism among workers in the pharmaceutical factories of Hamheung city, south Hamgyong province. Instead of going to the social mobilization which gave no wages, workers worked to earn their daily sustenance through alternative means, such as catching squid. The workers’ absenteeism did not get improved, despite factory officials visiting each house to encourage them to participate in the social mobilization. Absenteeism remained high even after officials sent some of the workers to discipline centers. Most of the workers who came to the workplace did not work hard enough. In some pharmaceutical factories that produce medicine such as Aspirin, workers’ attendance rates are high because workers could earn money by secretly selling medicine on the black market. In the past, drugs produced by the Hamheung pharmaceutical factory were well-known in the market, but these days, their reputations
have become tarnished because the drugs are not as effective as in the past. However, there are many drugs that illegally sold because of drug supply shortages. A significant fraction of the 100,000 doses of penicillin and mycin produced for tuberculosis hospitals in the first, 4th, and 5th Corporation have instead been sold to the black market. Factory efforts to prevent the unauthorized sale of drugs have not been effective. Since August 1, factories organized security details consisting of 8 single young women. They guard the front and rear gates.

In Shinyang County, The Families of County Party Officials Live a Privileged Life
The extended families of County Party officials live with them on the Shinyang village collective farms located in Shinyang County, South Pyongan Province. Due to the privileged status of their relatives, family members receive better farming land and more fertilizer. In reality, actual farming on Party member land is performed by ordinary mobilization workers who work on the collective farms without pay. Officials visit their families every Friday, but they only supervise and do not personally help with the farming. Party Family members receive a larger share than other collective farm workers, and they can even exchange their corn rations for rice. When the family grouping on the collective farm was first created, the families of County Party officials did not want to join. These days, family members are eager to join their relatives on the farm.

[Politics]
Reinforcement of the Reporting System for the Residents Living Near the Inter-Korean Border (the Armistice Line) in Jangyeon County
The Department of Propaganda of Jangyeon County Party in South Hwanghae Province is reinforcing the political work that strengthens the ideological resolution of the residents. The Party stated that it will mobilize the officers of the National Security Agency and the People’s Assembly. The officers will inform the residents of the reporting system and awaken their ideological awareness by providing training for the system in order to build up a strong foundation of socialism. Accordingly, the residents living near the Inter-Korean border are educated to promptly report every problem that occurs.

The Number of Defectors Is Not High This Year, But Most of Them Are Party Members
On October 15th, the Central Party sent a directive to each Province, requesting stricter punishment for defectors. The Party demanded severe punishment, stating that each Province should not overlook the increasing number of the party members who do not participate in the party-related activities because most defectors to South Korea from this January to September 30th are the party members who did not participate in the activities. In Gimchaek, North Hamgyong Province, the total number of defectors in the directive was thirteen. The Gimchaek city authorities announced that they will soon fire the party officers who did not pay attention to the situations of the missing party members and thus failed to prevent their defections to South Korea. Many defectors are party members because the security of the border has been tightened for the past few years. Only those who are
relatively rich, that is, party members, can afford to defect because of the increased risk and the cost of crossing the border.

**Follow-up Investigation Strengthened Due to the Increased Number of Defectors**

Although the number of defectors is not very high, a post-investigation is expected to be strengthened because of the increased number of defectors this year. According to the Central Party directive, the number of defectors this year is not high but has increased since last year. As a result, a joint team made of the parties of each Province, city, county, the National Security Agency, and the Police Station has been conducting follow-up investigation work for missing people, people not living at home, and especially the families of defectors. The Central Party stated that any law enforcement officer will be dishonorably discharged if one household or more than two people in an area where the officer is in charge turn out to be defectors. When the general residents’ meeting is held after the 100-Day Battle, many officers are expected to be discharged following this statement.

**[Society]**

**Gimchaek City, Young People from Poor Households Are the Only Ones Volunteering for Mt. Baekdoo Power Plant Construction**

The Youth Union Committee in Gimchaek City, North Hamgyong Province is having difficulty finding replacement laborers for the Mt. Baekdoo power plant construction. The party secretary and managers are making personal visits to farms, agencies, and enterprises to recruit young people because nobody volunteers for the work. The officials at factories and enterprises are trying to persuade people to volunteer by offering 50,000 NK won and 15kg of food. For those young people who are the head of a household they are offering guaranteed provision of wood for heating. A profile of the volunteers shows that a majority of them are the children of poor laborers who survive day to day on a diet of porridge. They are volunteering for the work because they want to provide extra food for their family. Unconcerned by food shortages, the children of the rich or government officials do not volunteer for the work.

**No Outside Aid for Nursing Homes in Wonsan-ri, Hoeryong City**

There are about 100 elderly people, including about 30 who are unable to move, at the nursing home in Wonsan-ri, in North Hamgyong Province. The nursing home does not receive any aid from the city’s People’s Council. As such, it can only rely on outside aid from the United Nations, foreign visitors, and overseas Koreans. However, the city diverts aid materials intended for the nursing home to the Osan Motel to take care of high officials who come for inspections. The nursing home tried to renovate three of their residents’ rooms, but there were not sufficient resources in the budget. So, the director and employees had to work on the farm. The director of the nursing home pleaded to the City Party to share some of the aid materials received from overseas Koreans, but to no avail. On the contrary, they were criticized by Jin Yong-ho, the first vice chairman of city People’s Council and received reprimands. The food situation at the nursing home at Wonsan-ri is not so good either. Elderly residents in the facility live on porridge made with corn powder.
Those who can still move around do their own small patch farming to support themselves. Those who are immobile do not receive enough corn powder porridge, suffer from various diseases, and face slow death. Once there were big competitions to get admitted to the nursing home using personal connections because of its good facilities and stable provision of food, but those conditions have become a thing of the past.

[Women/Children/Education]

_Hoeyang_ Middle School Designated as an Exemplary Physical Education School

On September 13, 2009 _Hoeyang_ Middle School in _Hoeyang_ County, _Kangwon_ Province demonstrated physical fitness, mass gymnastics, Taekwondo, and received the designation of ‘exemplary physical education’ school. The officials from the Ministry of Education, Provincial Party Education Department, Provincial People’s Council Education Department, and the _Hoeyang_ County Party Education Department served as judges. The school had been practicing high intensity training for mass gymnastics and youth Taekwondo from 2pm to 7pm after having regular classes during the morning hours so that they can receive an exemplary designation. The 4th to 6th grade students performing mass gymnastics had to wear dark blue uniforms and the 1st to 3rd graders were required to wear red uniforms. However, the poor parents who struggle to buy food could not buy the uniforms, which cost 12,000 NK won for mass gymnastics and 9,000 NK won for Taekwondo, respectively. On the day of assessment, about one third of the students had to go home because they did not have the required uniforms. The homeroom teachers visited the homes of the students and pleaded with their parents, but many of them could not afford the uniform. They had to proceed and perform the demonstrations only with those students who had the uniforms being able to participate and earn the exemplary designation. Nevertheless, the school did not receive a high mark.

_Middle School Instructs Students to Buy Gym Suit for Nomination as an “Exemplary Physical Education School”_

In _Pohang_ Middle School in _Pohang_ Division, _Chungjin_, _North Hamgyong_ Province, the students have done several exercises, including Taekwondo and group gymnastics, every day after school since the fall. The training was for the sake of the school’s nomination as an Exemplary Physical Education School. The teachers told the students to buy a red uniform to unify their outfit. However, parents who are daily wage earners could not afford the price of the uniform, which costs more than 10,000 won. Not fully understanding their family’s financial situation, children refused to go to school, clamoring for the uniform. In addition to the uniform, the school also prepared gifts of alcohol and cigarettes to win the judges’ favor. The alcohol and cigarettes were also collected from the students, adding to the distress of their parents.

[Accidents]

_Pyongsung – Chungjin_, Railroad Blocked for 5 Days Due to Train Accident

On October 17, a train from _Chungjin_ in _North Hamgyong_ Province heading for _Pyongsung_ in _South Pyongsung_ Province was derailed. A female merchant from _Pyongsung_, on her way
back home after purchasing 35 rolls of cloth in Chungjin, got off the train at the station immediately before Pyongsung in order to avoid any inspection. In her haste, she hurriedly unloaded the cloth and it rolled into the wheel of the train. Since the train stops at the station only for 5 minutes, the merchant was in a hurry. The train ended up derailing as the wheel became entangled with the cloth. After slipping off the rails, the five passenger cars continued more than 300 meters, leaving the rail bent and breaking the railroad ties. 30 minutes after the accident, the director of the South Pyongan Province Railroad Authority, a political commissioner, and officers from the public prosecutors office of the railroad police station came to the scene and immediately ordered repairs, which were delayed due to a lack of railroad ties. North Korea’s Rail Authority directed the railroad to be repaired in 24 hours but it actually took more than 5 days. The accident caused huge inconveniences in several industry sites since it occurred during the 100-day battle. Deliveries of steel to the munitions factory in Kangye in Jagang Province were delayed, causing interruptions in the manufacturing process. The cloth merchant, the security guard of the train, and his immediate superior were all arrested and held accountable for the accident. The police station personnel and the train crew of the Chungjin railroad authority office in North Hamgyong Province are all subject to a joint inspection by the Central Party and the Organization and Guidance Department of the Provincial Party.
Please become a good friend of the Good Friends

Good Friends– An International NGO for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees

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.

Currently, Good Friends is making efforts to improve humanitarian and human rights situation of North Korean people and to inform this situation to the international community by:

1) Collecting information on food shortages, public health conditions, education, the basic necessities situations and inform humanitarian organizations so that they can support North Korean people effectively.
2) Reporting the current human rights situation in North Korea where rights duly protected by law are being violated; assessing incidents of human rights violations in the process of arrest, punishment, and imprisonment and informing international communities; and requesting that the North Korean Government act to improve human rights.
3) Investigating the current situations of North Korean refugees in China, and providing protections and aid for them and their children in particular.

For these purposes, Good Friends USA publishes the weekly newsletter North Korea Today (English edition) to inform the international public.

You can make a difference by donating to Good Friends USA, Inc. Contributions to the Good Friends USA, Inc. (a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code) are tax deductible.

Individuals wishing to make a financial donation to Good Friends USA may send a check to the following address. For more information, please contact us.

Good Friends USA
(DC) 734 15th Street N.W. Suite # 500B, Washington, DC 20005
(MD) 4605 Powder Mill Rd., Beltsville, MD 20705
Phone: 202-824-0788(DC); 301-455-9196(Cell)
FAX: 301-937-0748
E-mail: goodfriends_usa@yahoo.com
http://www.goodfriendsusa.blogspot.com

Good Friends Korea Headquarter
E-mail: goodfriends@jungto.org
Tel: 82-2-587-8992; Fax: 82-2-587-8998
http://www.goodfriends.or.kr