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“Research Institute for North Korean Society of Good Friends, in order to bring news of the food crisis in North Korea more accurately and quickly, will increase its e-newsletter frequency to more than one issue per week. As such, the release dates might shift. Thank you for your understanding and attention to this looming crisis. We at Good Friends hope to be a bridge between the North Korean people and the world.”

[Special Report]

Increasingly Open and Candid Lectures on Agriculture for the Officials and the Public

In April 2008, the North Korean government issued a report nationwide on the farming conditions of the country. One official said that he received a tremendous shock when he saw the report for the first time. According to the official, although many government reports have been issued in North Korea since the founding of the country, there has been no reports as open and candid as this one. The official said that he believed the Central Department of Propaganda and Agitation (중앙선전선동부) was the agency that issued the report, and went on to say that he was able to surmise just how serious the current conditions are after reading the report. He went on to say that the report shows that “the government already anticipated that people would die from starvation in the spring, and that this lecture was devised in order to enhance the internal congruency. The report contains candid and open references to the current situation’s unprecedented nature. The ‘North Korea TODAY’ will present the government report entitled “Everyone Needs to Work Together to Ensure a Good Harvest” in the next five issues.

[Special Report]

Introduction of North Korea’s Nationwide Report Two - “Let’s Unify In Fighting For Better Harvest This Year.”

There is an old saying that one spring day determines the whole year’s harvest. It means that every one day in the spring is important for the entire year’s harvest. Therefore, all the workers have to be unified with the desire to be responsible and fruitful.

In order to achieve this:

Subject everything to farming and secure farming materials first and foremost. Considering the economic situation in this country, we have many in need. Nonetheless, the securing of farming materials can not be neglected. Actually, it is the first time that collective farm are short of farming materials by such a large amount. If this pace goes on, it will cause an incredibly poor harvest. However, some workers and farmers are only thinking of their own interests or preservation of their

workplace and so men do not even try to secure farming materials which are supposed to be secured. (Real Examples Are Needed)

It is impossible to come up with something helpful to farmers while using up ours. Every worker has to get involved in a fight for securing farming materials timely. This fight should be organized because it is under our national plan. Particularly fertilizer, vinyl sheet, oil, minerals, agricultural chemicals, and other farming materials, and electricity should be put aside in advance. At the same time, please visit every collective farm from time to time and see what obstacles they face in this fight. Don't help collective farm just technically, but help them practically using all the possible means out there. Next, labor for farming should be facilitated, too. Ordinary farm workers are not enough to prepare the entire nation's food. Thus, everybody should help farmers mentally and physically. We should especially put every effort in *Monaegi* (모내기; transplanting rice seedlings), transplanting young corn plant, and wheat and rye harvest which are supposed to be done in the spring. The past years' farming support projects have contributed to the increase of harvest production. (Real Examples Needed)

However, there were still some people who were reluctant to participate in this project. (Real Examples Needed)

This should not happen again this year again. Workers should not idle or play or drink while they were helping farmers, nor should they ask for some rewards from farmers over their labor. (Real Examples Needed)

[Special Report] Only Residents Are Suffering Over the Farming Material Secure Project

To solve the food crisis, the Party has taken the first step to securing farming materials first and foremost. They said that even if our economy is bad, there is to productively farm without securing farming materials first. They added that this year, they had the biggest shortage of farming materials in history, and without correcting this, the harvest would be disastrous. Even though they didn't explain what the outcome would be, they expressed it would be very dangerous.

It was last March when the North and South relationship went dramatically bad, and it was last April when the lecture materials came out. At that time, the North already abandoned any hope that President Lee would provide fertilizers. With no expectation for domestic fertilizer production, a price increase in foreign fertilizers, and with no where to import fertilizer from, it was only natural that the North got desperate. Not only fertilizer, but vinyl sheet, oil, tire, agricultural chemicals and other farming materials are all in serious need.

It is good to disclose the shortage honestly, but the solution is to urge residents. The Party is not hesitant to order people to get farming materials on their own. They ordered people to do something that the government can't do. They even advised them to do it wholeheartedly, and not to idly wait. There is no execution of governmental duty, but only imposition of duties on people.

Last May, in North Pyongan, the Party ordered a contribution of 200 kg of human excrement per each person. Residents were even joking about this order, "If one person eats 150 g a meal, which is 164 kg per year, how can a person make 200 kg out of 164 kg?" This reflects the painful reality of people facing the Party's order to secure fertilizer.

[Special Report] South's Support of 300,000 MT Are Equal to Support of 600,000-700,000 MT

One North Korean defector said that the South's fertilizer support comprised huge portion of the entire fertilizer need in the North: "In the North, fertilizer factories have shut down after the Third 7 Year Plan. Since then, the South provided 300,000 MT of fertilizer every year, but in terms of its ingredients, it equals 600,000-700,000 MT. The effective ingredients in fertilizer are up to 40% in case of South fertilizer, compared to 15% of North fertilizer. The lecture materials said if the situation went on, the outcome would be disastrous. I have never seen this kind of serious expression from the lecture materials. This is the first time to use that expression. It means those 300,000 MT from the South was so important to the North in the past. It was an absolute dependency of the North on the South fertilizer."

City of Hoeryong Hit by a Whirlwind of Triple-Layered Investigations

Like Sinuiju, city of Hoeryong has been hit by a whirlwind of investigations. The investigations from City or County are being conducted against anti-socialist activities that may have infiltrated the cities along the national border. The investigations are centered on the illegal crossing of the border, and especially on the illegal smuggling and peddling of narcotics such as 'ice.' The second wave of investigators from the National Security Agency(국가보위부) are concentrating their resources on those residents who try to send money home after illegally crossing the border into China, those who transport the money from China to the residents in North Korea, and those families who own cell phones. In addition, the Inspection Patrols investigating the anti-socialist activities at the Central Party basically target families who appear to live in relative luxury even though they do not have any visible sources of business income. The residents caught in the tight net of investigations cannot afford to display negative emotions and it is generally tough for them.

New Policy Set After the Site Visit To Heungnam Fertilizer Plant

On June 4, 2008, Chairman Kim Jong-Il of the National Defense Committee set a new policy after a site visit to the Heungnam fertilizer plant. He declared, "We need more fertilizer for this year's successful farming. We have to secure fertilizer production and send it to all the farms in the nation. We need to cover every inch of the farms with the fertilizer and we should not be late in laying it on the fields. In order to secure transportation of the fertilizer, the rail system should be enhanced." A policy was ordered to set up new repair procedures for freight cars and to enhance the means of transportation and production of fertilizer.

Severe Damage on Corn from Cold Weather in Saebyul County

The unusual low temperatures in North Hamgyong Province, Ryanggang Province, and North Pyongan Province has caused serious cold-weather damage to corn crop. On May 3, approximately 30 *Jungbo* (approximately 73.5 acres) of corn per farm in Saebyul County of North Hamgyong Province was destroyed due to frost and strong winds. Some farms plowed up the corn fields damaged from the cold weather and have planted beans instead. On the other hand, the leading secretary of Saebyul County, indicating that real labor hours are too short under the general labor mobilization, expanded the hours of work. Originally, supportive farm work began at 8:30 AM and ended around 3:00 PM, giving laborers time from 4:00 to 6:00 to run their own businesses. However, the shortening of personal hours to conduct their own business has made it more difficult for workers to earn even one day's living.

Rising Oil Prices Keep Fishing Boats at Harbors

The number of fishing boats not going out to sea is increasing in the eastern coast areas due to the sharp increase in oil prices. A small fishing boat, like a barge, that does not need oil, can manage to go

take fishermen out to sea. However, bigger fishing boats are being kept stationary in the harbor due to the increasing oil prices. Many companies purchased oil with borrowed money and are subsequently millions of won in debt. Fishermen can catch small octopuses during the month of July, the official octopus season, which allows them to pay the debt and provide food. However, the rising oil prices, on top of increasing food prices, does not fare well for fishermen. They are full of worries about how they can pay back their increasing debt even with their catches.

Sinuiju, Having Huge Difficulty Getting Even Undesirable Jobs

It is now even extremely difficult to get a job that requires the loading and unloading of freight in warehouses in Sinuiju. For example, young people in their twenties or thirties try their best to get a job like this with an advance payment of 100,000 won. They get paid 3,000 to 4,000 won per ton when they load goods, whereas 2,000 won per ton when they unload. Although the work is hard and intense, the unemployed young people are drawn to these jobs out of desperation. The parking area, the front yard of a passenger transport company, is crowded with such people as seeking jobs.

Residents of Pihyeon County, Earning Their Living through Selling Candles

Bonghwa chemical factory is located at the Baekmaro-dongjagoo(백마루동자구) in Pihyeon County. Paraffin comes out after liquefied gas, benzene, kerosene, and gasoline are produced through imports of crude oil. This year the price of paraffin, which sold for 20,000 won per ton last year, sharply increased because of the production decrease. Residents around these regions sell candles by stealing paraffin and colluding with the State Security Department. The high demand for candles resulted from the deteriorated electric situation and makes the candle business very profitable. For example, in Sinuiju, a candle with a thickness of ball-point pen is sold for 50 won, but it burns out in less than an hour. The candles are delivered almost nationwide after being packed within paper boxes. In Wonsan, these candles are sold for 70 to 80 won.



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