

NORTH KOREANS SUBJECT TO HARSHER MARKET CONTROLS

Good Friends, a non-profit organization working for human rights in North Korea, reported recently that North Korean residents are becoming increasingly discontent due to the government's strengthening of restrictions on markets.

The group's online newsletter, "North Korea Today," reported in its most recent issue (no. 275) that a new list of banned items, presented as the "February 17th policy", was issued by authorities to women selling goods in the market in Chungjin, North Hamgyong Province on April 10th.

According to a Good Friends source, Party propaganda officials were dispatched to markets in broadcasting trucks in order to announce the new measure, blaring that the selling of goods on the list of banned items would be considered "anti-socialist" activity, and would be punished accordingly.

Other sources report that the ban has resulted in an increase of door-to-door sales, and that those in the market are still willing to take individual orders for goods on the banned list, and then meet outside of the market to complete the deal.

In Hyeryong, North Hamgyong Province and Hyesan, Ryanggang Province, the "February 17 policy" was posted around markets, but the details of the policy were not explained. In the city of Hamheung, market hours were also restricted, with sellers only allowed to operate from 1~6



pm.

The goods restricted were mostly imported wares, with as much as 90 percent of foreign goods banned, and absolutely all South Korean products blocked. Those caught selling restricted items can expect to have their goods confiscated, with additional punishment not unheard of.