

PRICE OF DPRK RICE DROPS

One kilogram of rice in North Korea, the price of which shot up to as much as 4,500 DPRK won last month, has reportedly fallen in price this month by up to 2000 won.

According to a North Korean source, on June 10, one kilogram of rice was selling for between 2,500 – 2,700 across the country, quoting prices from cities such as Horyong and Chongjin (North Hamgyong Province), Wonsan (Kangwon Province), Sinuiju (North Pyongan Province), Kangye (Changang Province), Kangso (South Pyongan Province), and Haeju (South Hwangae Province). The source explained, “as soon as rice prices skyrocketed, smuggling in the border region picked up and permission to export 100,000 tons [of grain] came from the Chinese government, and as this occurred, the import food eased a little.”

The source also said that spreading news of food aid from the United States was also an important factor in the falling grain prices.

However, the source stressed, “While the price is falling, food prices are still more than three times what they were last year, so citizens with no money have a hard time feeding themselves...in agricultural regions with no money, famine is spreading regardless of falling grain prices.”

It was also reported that on June 11, a shipment of corn arrived at Chongjin Port (North Hamgyong Province) and distribution to workers has begun, while on the 12th, polished rice, corn, and other grains entered Heungnam Port (South Hamgyong Province) was distribution

began the next day. Corn was priced at 800 won per kilogram, easier to purchase than the 1,200 – 1,300 won prices found in markets, but more than two times as expensive as market prices at this time last year.

Good Friends, an organization working to aid North Korean people, reported in its newsletter, “Between the end of June and beginning of July, workers in Pyongyang will receive 2 kg of polished rice, 7 kg of milled corn, and 5kg of Southeast Asian rice, for a total of 14 kilograms of rations per person...in the areas surrounding Pyongyang many people cannot work due to starvation,” and they had a hard time swallowing news of these rations.