

DPRK CITIZENS TURN TO BATTERIES, BICYCLES TO SOLVE ENERGY SHORTAGES

North Koreans, long suffering from a chronic energy shortage, are now putting forth efforts to solve even this electrical issue on their own.

The Daily NK, a South Korean-based human rights organization, has learned from interviews with North Korean residents that these days, even in farming villages, families with regular incomes are relying on batteries to light their houses and power their televisions.

Many batteries are being imported from China, and there are also many households using bicycle-mounted generators to produce electricity to overcome energy shortages. Despite the fact that these North Koreans are living in a Socialist country that fails to provide them electricity, they are coming up with their own methods for solving problems.

According to these North Koreans, there is a difference in the way they are solving the electrical shortages in the cities and in the farming communities. In the cities, many are using rechargeable car batteries. There, power is provided from around 8:00am to 1:00pm, and then again in the evenings from around 8:00pm until 11:00pm. During these times, batteries are recharged and then used later for lighting and watching television.

In order to use these batteries to watch television or videos, direct current needs to be transformed into 220-volt alternating current, requiring a small power converter. The prohibitive cost of such a converter means that in farming communities, the use of batteries to power households is difficult.

This has led many in rural areas to find a slightly different method of solving their energy needs. In farming villages, small generators attached to the rear wheel of bicycles so that 'human power' is used to produce electricity.

The cost of a used car battery in North Korea is around 70,000 won, while a new battery could run as much as 120,000~160,000 won. Batteries produced in China are of high quality, but if there is ever a problem, it is difficult to have them repaired. Therefore, 'Daedong River' car batteries produced in North Korea are preferred.