

The Agreement of the South-North Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee and the Agony of North Korea

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The painstaking efforts of the South Korean government are clearly seen in the agreement of the 13th South-North Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee which was taking place in the process of implementing the February 13 Agreement. Providing North Korea with a total of 400,000 tons of rice is scheduled in late May giving enough time for the North to take the first steps of implementing the February 13 Agreement. However, the test-run of the Gyeongui and Donghae railway lines which were cancelled a day prior a year ago is scheduled on May 17 that is earlier than the promised rice aid. So it depends on the North whether the country can receive the support of the rice and raw materials for light industries from the South. In order to get the rice aid, the North should start carrying out the agreement at least until the end of May and should abide by the test-run of the train in advance to get the support of the raw materials for the light industries. If the North goes into its act of implementing the Feb. 13 Agreement, supporting the raw materials for the light industries which is scheduled to begin in June is time-wise, not a burden.

Although the South Korean government didn't get the clear statement for the military safety guarantee related to the test-run of the trains, there is no way that the raw materials supported by the South go to the North if the North doesn't carry out the test - run because of the reason. It would be better if the South Korean government linked the rice aid with the Feb. 13 Agreement, but as mentioned in the agreement the rice is given in the name of humanitarian aid and also when the timing is considered, the aid should be provided under the condition of North Korea's implementation to the Feb.13 Agreement. In addition, if we consider the fact that the countries of the Six-Party Talks are paying attention to an act of the North to resolve the nuclear issue, too much grumbling for not connecting the rice aid with the Feb.13 Agreement is not necessary. If the North doesn't take the first step of implementing the agreement until late May, the communist country cannot get the rice aid but also receive some kind of pressure and blame from the relevant countries such as the US and the international community.

Maybe the North is in agony worried about facing the change followed by implementing the first step of the Agreement. The country can receive the rice aid and the raw materials for the light industries with taking the first steps of implementing the Agreement, but in return its military freeze policy, which equals to the last fort of protecting their system, should be lifted. If put it the other way the military safety guarantee for the train service is the estimated result of military influence toward the North Korean system. For the North, the more the train runs, the more the military damage toward the system occurs.

If the North receives the raw materials for the light industries from the South, the country has to unbolt the gate for the joint development of underground resources. It can start with the joint investigation which also influences the North Korean system. In addition to that, the pass and entry problems between the two Koreas should be approached with more easing way for the construction of the Kaesung Industrial Complex, which is stated in the agreement of the 13th South-North Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee. If the test-run goes successfully, what is the next step? Naturally the next step is the opening of the train service. There is not much meaning of the one-time test run, economic-wise. It is necessary to open the train service in order to accomplish the continuous supply of the raw materials for the light industries.

The train service should be followed by the test-run and that means the North has to open its inside and the communist country is in agony worried about the negative ripple effect followed by that. The military safety guarantee can be an excuse. Everyday hundreds of vehicles come and go into the Kaesung Industrial Complex and thousands of people cross the military demarcation line to go to the Keumkang Mountain. It's not reasonable to consider the military safety guarantee so sensitively for the one-time test run. It may be understandable if the North is not interested in improving the relationship with the US, but in the situation of accepting the Feb.13 Agreement, it has to be different.

In the process of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue the opening of the North Korean society is easily understandable without asking. It is obvious that the North is in agony to encounter the situation of being naked to the international community and that agony is totally different with the South deciding the aid toward the North.

In the end the North would have no choice but to accept the fact that it is the right direction to take to cooperate and be compatible with the South, but the communist country is expected to do it within bounds of they can control. However it also cannot be that easy and that is the real agony of the North and it has already started.