

## **RECENT 'FACE-LIFT' OF THE NORTH KOREAN JOONGGU MARKET**

As North Korea aggressively adopted market functions through economic reform measures on July 1, 2002, the 'Joonggu Market' in Pyongyang's central Joonggu neighborhood became a beehive of activity as customers came looking for deals. While permission was granted for the sale of equipment and parts in markets such as Pyongyang's Unification Market, Joonggu market became more of an agricultural and textile retail center.

According to the September edition of North Korea's pictorial 'Chosun' report, the Joonggu market is now a two-story market selling agricultural goods and other foodstuffs, manufactured goods, and handmade wares, and what essentially amounts to OEM products now that factories are allowed to sell off 'surplus' manufactured goods exceeding government-set quotas. In particular, most clothing on display in the stores appears to be imported, higher quality selection, and the clean take-out food stalls are noticeably different from the dirty markets of the past.

In the market, prices are 100% the result of haggling between buyers and sellers. However, the sale here of materials, accessories, and medicines is restricted, and the sale of pornography and other items deemed harmful to the people is strictly prohibited.

Overall control of the items sold in the market is the responsibility of the market management office. This latest report states, "The responsibility and role of managers in this office is to maintain the high quality of the market and put forth every effort to help make the lives of the people more comfortable." In addition, all agricultural goods must go through a quality control inspection before they can be sold. The 'Chosun' stresses, "Of course, sellers of meat, seafood, etc. are only granted permission to sell their goods after a stringent inspection."

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