

On the Special Feature 2 : Efforts made for economic development in the DPRK

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To compile this special issue, we received eight research papers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereinafter referred to as the DPRK) and one from China. Those from the DPRK primarily discuss the newly formulated party economic policies announced at the 3rd plenum of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in April 2018 which focus all efforts on economic development. The entry from China details cross-border economic cooperation in the China-DPRK border region of Jilin Province, China. Below, I will provide a brief introduction of them.

The DPRK shifts from the Byungjin Line to the one prioritizing economic construction

On April 20, 2018, the 3rd plenum of the 7th Central Committee of the WPK was held. Here, the government adopted a decision to end the "byungjin line", a policy advancing simultaneous economic and nuclear-weapon development" that was agreed upon at the 23rd meeting of the 6th Central Committee on March 31,

2013, to suspend intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test-firing and nuclear tests from the following day, and to scrap the Northern Nuclear Test Site, ensuring the transparency of the suspension of nuclear tests.

The decision is taken as a change in the basic line of the DPRK. In this regard, Kim Ung-ho, a section chief of the Economic Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences of the DPRK (KASS), notes in a "New Strategic Line of the Workers' Party of Korea" that the construction of a socialist power "demands that all fields of social life, including politics, economics, and culture, be solidified to qualify as a powerful country", moreover, the aim of this new alignment is to strengthen overall national power through development of not only the military and politics, whose foundations have already been laid, but also in the field of economic development. The objective of economic construction is to "create an autonomous contemporary socialist economy and knowledge economy," and although importance is placed on "modernization and computerization," the recent state of

strengthened economic sanctions has further emphasized self-reliance as a methodology. However, he emphasizes that “prioritizing economic development in the general activities of the party and the state, and mobilizing all the people, physical and technical potential of the country towards economic development” is an important issue of “the Workers’ Party of Korea, which advocates the improvement of people’s lives as the highest fundamental principle of party activities”. Differences with the previous theory of self-reliance can be observed, as the present self-reliance does not refer to only the domestic development and procurement of raw materials, fuels and technology, and import substitution, but during difficult situations, while relying on domestic resources, it highlights the ability to achieve higher production by applying the results of scientific and technological development to industrial sites.

Outcomes of Economic Construction in Each Field

The series of papers discuss the nature of outcomes for the DPRK in relation to prioritizing economic construction

Kim Chol Min, a researcher at the Human Rights Institute, KASS in his paper “Construction Achievements in the Light Industry Sector and Improving the People’s Rights to Material Life”, explains that many new factories were built in the light industry sector, and introduces the development of new products following equipment updates at several kimchi production facilities, such as the Ryugyong Kimchi Factory in Pyongyang, various potato processing plants in Samjiyon County (now promoted to Samjiyon City), food production at the Gold Cup Athletes’ Comprehensive Food Factory in Pyongyang and the Pyongyang Cornstarch Factory, the Kim Jong Suk Pyongyang Textile Mill in Pyongyang, the Kim Jong Suk Pyongyang Silk Mill, the improvements in processes and development of new products at the Huichon Silk Mill in North Phyongan Province, the expansion of facilities and increase in production items at shoe and bag factories in various regions, and the development of new products at the Pyongyang Cosmetics Plant in Pyongyang and the Sinuiju Cosmetics Factory in Sinuiju, North Phyongan Province.

In “Construction Achievements in the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector and Improving the People’s Material Life”, An Sung Jin, a researcher of the same institute, describes progress in agriculture, including land arrangement (field maintenance) to expand farmable areas and construction of reclaimed land, land restoration and land cultivation, the construction of farmland through the organization of riverbeds, the construction of reservoirs and waterways for irrigation, technological innovations in the production of agricultural machinery at the Kumsong Tractor Factory, and the construction of new ranches in the livestock sector. Further, the author introduces that the establishment and update of fisheries bases (processing plants and fishing ports) and fish farms (fish farms and processing plants) is being carried out in the fisheries industry.

Choe Ok Hyang, a researcher of the same institute, introduces the recent housing construction through representative residential areas and housing in “The Outcomes of Modern Housing Construction and Improving People’s Rights to Housing”.

Ri Hui Suk, a researcher of the same institution, details in “Construction Achievements in the Education and Health Sector and Improving the People’s Cultural Rights”, recent examples of construction of education and health care facilities, various measures related to the one-year extension of compulsory education (from 4th to 5th grade of elementary school) from 2017, the spread of higher education, the enhancement of educational fa-

cilities for children with special needs, the improvement of facilities and programs for extracurricular education, and the enhancement of production facilities for school supplies and school bags, among others, to ensure children’s material and cultural rights.

Mun Song, a researcher at the Economic Institute of KASS, introduces the development process of tourism in the the DPRK and the potential of tourism, recent developments in tourist destinations, and the current state of diversification of tourism targets. For more on tourism in North Korea, please refer to “Tourism in North Korea” by Isozaki Atsuhito (Mainichi Shimbun Publishing, 2019).

Science and Technology Promotion and an Intellectual Property Rights Protection System

Kim Sung Il, a researcher at the Human Rights Institute, KASS, lists in “Intellectual Property Protection System and Its Capacity to Function in the DPRK”, the laws related to the protection of intellectual property rights in the DPRK, including copyright law, science and technology law, invention law, computer software protection law, gene transfer biosafety law, law on mark of origin, industrial design law, trademark law, organic industry law, meteorological law and software industry law. Moreover, the contents of copyright law, invention law and science and technology law are introduced.

Constitutional Amendments in 2019

In 2019, the Supreme People’s Assembly was held on April 11 and August 29, at which the constitution of the DPRK was twice amended. In relation to these constitutional amendments, Ri Man Sok, a researcher at the Law Institute, KASS, outlines the historical process of constitutional development in the DPRK and clarifies their main points in “On the Amended and Replenishment of the Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”.

Aspects of Cross-Border Economic Cooperation with the DPRK in Jilin Province, China

Prof. Li Shenghua, ERINA Joint Researcher and Associate Professor at the School of Economics and Management, Yanbian University, along with Mr. Liu Huijian of Yanbian University’s School of Economics and Management, co-author “A Study on Cross-border Economic Cooperation between China and the DPRK in the District of Changchun-Jilin-Tumen River Region”, which details the aspects and prospects of cross-border cooperation between China and the DPRK in the regional development of Changchun, Jilin Province, and the Tumen River region (Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture) in Jilin Province, the history of economic policy of the DPRK, the milestones in opening up the Changchun-Jilin-Tumen River Region, including the Tumen River Area Development Programme (TRADP) and the Great Tumen Initiative (GTI), and separately, highlights the aspects and prospects of potential cross-border economic development between China and the DPRK.

Furthermore, in this special feature, improving the lives of its people has become an important policy issue in the DPRK, and in relation to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, it has been reported that in spite of the international sanctions imposed by United Nations Security Council resolutions, concerted efforts are being made to improve the people’s lives.

With regards to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, in

fostering a relationship of trust between itself and the United States, the DPRK's demand for the forging of a new U.S.-DPRK relationship and the establishment of a sustainable and robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, in other words, the question of how to position the DPRK in international relations after the East-West Cold War, and U.S. demands for the denuclearization of the DPRK, it is difficult to advance in the direction of a resolution unless it is carried out concurrently with the principle of action versus action. However, should the U.S. and the DPRK successfully find the key to solving this conundrum, when we look at changes in the DPRK since April 2018, it should be noted that the DPRK economy may change at a different pace development direction than during the Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il eras, and the possibility that the post-East-West Cold War issues encompassing the Korean Peninsula will move toward a solution at a faster rate has not been completely lost.

ERINA REPORT (PLUS) will continue to approach aspects of change in the DPRK economy through discussion with experts in the DPRK and Northeast Asian neighbors.

[Translated by ERINA]