

DPRK's Response against COVID-19 (Summary)

MIMURA Mitsuhiro

Senior Research Fellow, Research Division, ERINA

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereinafter referred to as North Korea), all borders were blocked in early February due to the spread of COVID-19 in China. They segregated foreign nationals, including diplomats, and citizens that returned from overseas, and conducted medical observation measures for those who came into contact with them. Preventing COVID-19 is seen as an opportunity to advertise the "superiority and power" of North Korea's socialist system to the world.

In the Rodong Shinmun, or the party gazette, 903 articles were searched with the keyword "coronavirus infectious disease" from January 26, 2020 to May 24, 2020. Among them, about 90% of them are reports on COVID-19 in foreign countries. The remaining 10% of the reports were on the current status and epidemic prevention system in North Korea. Among them, six lead editorials and one editorial have been published on COVID-19.

According to the reports, it seems that the containment was achieved late in May 2020. However, as long as the virus epidemic continues, it is probable that for the sake of epidemic protection the nation will be required to remain in a state of "isolation" for quite some time. It is difficult for North Korea to imagine a new era of prosperity in return for denuclearization, and there is concern that the pandemic may have a decelerating effect on their will to denuclearize.

Keywords: COVID-19, coronavirus, isolation, epidemic prevention, denuclearization

JEL classification: I18, O53, P20, P30