

On the Special Feature : Novel Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19) and the Economy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

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This issue's special feature, titled "Novel Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19) and the Economy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)", consists of two papers on the impact of COVID-19 on the economy in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereinafter referred to as the DPRK) and the direction of the DPRK economy, including its impact.

The first article, "Direction of the DPRK Economy— 'strategy for the development and reinforcement of the industrial base' and new ways for implementation of a policy," by Pak Jae Hun. The "Five-Year National Economic Development Plan" formulated at the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) embodies a development and reinforcement strategy to restore organic linkages among economic sectors and strengthen the economy's independent foundation so that the economy can be managed without being influenced by foreign economic relations. It is being carried out under the basic theme of 'self-reliance and self-sufficiency'. The DPRK experienced an outbreak of COVID-19 patients in May 2022. The Expanded Session of the Fifth General Assembly of the Eighth Session of the Workers' Party of Korea assessed the execution of economic policies in the first half of FY2022 as adhering to stability and the speed of development even under the state of emergency. At the same time, it stipulated that agriculture and the production of consumer goods needed for daily life were urgent issues on this year's economic agenda. The paper concluded that COVID-19 will inevitably have a negative impact on future economic management. It also concludes that the future course of the DPRK's party and

government will be closely watched.

The following paper is my article, "Current Status and Prospects of New Coronavirus Infections in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea". The DPRK admitted for the first time that it had a case of new-type coronavirus infection (COVID-19) at the 8th meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea held on May 12, 2022. The number of "fever cases" in the DPRK peaked on May 15 and has since been consistently falling. Sino-DPRK trade declined significantly in 2020 compared to the previous year due to the closure of the Sino-DPRK border with the transition to a special quarantine regime on January 30, 2020; with the resumption of railway transport in January 2022, Chinese exports to the DPRK from January to April of the same year increased significantly year-on-year. However, with the suspension of railway transport in late April, they declined significantly in May. The report concludes that if China were to make a full-scale transition to the new normal with COVID-19 with the conclusion of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China, North Korea would be expected to take a different approach, such as reopening border crossings.

Even the DPRK economy, which is based on the self-reliance and self-sufficiency of its people, cannot exist without economic relations with China and other foreign countries. When considering future developments, it will be necessary to pay attention not only to domestic policy decisions but also to trends in changes in foreign relations.