
Outline of the symposium ‘Economy and Trade of North Korea’

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There is a significant accumulation of research regarding the system and state of the economy and trade of North Korea in Japan. However, these aspects are often misunderstood, even among overseas journalists and researchers. Understanding the economy and trade of North Korea from a foreign perspective certainly appears to be difficult.

Therefore, we held the ‘Economy and Trade of North Korea’ symposium and webinar in Niigata on January 9th, 2021 to introduce more people to the system and state of the economy and trade of North Korea. Three researchers who are specialists in the North Korean economy described the economic and trade conditions of North Korea, and six researchers commented on the situation to reporters at this symposium. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, nine persons participated in the symposium, and 138 participants out of 189 registrants watched the webinar. I would determine that ‘Economy and Trade of North Korea’ was successful.

The Bulletin of Seigakuin University General Research Institute, No.67 is a collection of articles, which bring some corrections to the reports and comments made at ‘Economy and Trade of North Korea’. Therefore, we have edited it in the order of the reports made at the symposium.

1. The economic and trade systems of North Korea

Reporter: NAKAGAWA Masahiko (Senior Researcher, Institute of Developing Economies Japan External Trade Organization [IDE-JETRO])

A. Commentator: IKEUCHI Satoshi (Professor, University of Tokyo)

B. Commentator: NAKANISHI Yoshihiro (Associate Professor, Kyoto University)

2. International trade and exchanges with China

Reporter: HOTTA Yukihiro (Senior Researcher, The Kazankai Foundation)

A. Commentator: MATSUDA Yasuhiro (Professor, University of Tokyo)

B. Commentator: YAMANE Kenji (Associate Professor, Fukuoka Women's University)

3. International trade and exchanges with Russia, Mongolia, and other countries

Reporter: MIMURA Mitsuhiro (Senior Research Fellow, The Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia [ERINA])

A. Commentator: TAMADA Yoshifumi (Professor, Kyoto University)

B. Commentator: HONNA Jun (Professor, Ritsumeikan University)

North Korea has built diplomatic and economic relations with many countries and areas, contrary to its commonly disseminated portrayal, which depicts it as isolated from the world. Therefore, we aim to investigate the economic and trade systems of North Korea, which was the primary purpose of this symposium.

However, we also need to understand it as an aspect of the foreign relations of North Korea. Trade volume is not necessarily proportional to the degree of amicable relations in foreign policy. For instance, although China has been the largest trading partner of Japan in recent years, its most significant ally is the United States. Similar to Japan, the amicable foreign relations of North Korea might differ from its trading partners. However, our knowledge of the foreign relations of North Korea is limited. We hope to clarify this aspect in the future.