

Sejong Policy Brief



THE SEJONG INSTITUTE

No. 2020-07 (June 16, 2020)

Executive Summary

Healthcare System in North Korea and Inter-Korean Cooperation



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*This article is written based on the author's personal opinions
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Executive Summary

□ Restoration of Effective Healthcare System and Normalization of Production

- The North Korean healthcare system constituted of universal health care, preventive medicine, and assignment of physicians to provide medical services in designated areas. However, it became nominal after the economic crisis of the 1990s, leaving many residents in blind spots.
- Since the Kim Jong Un era, North Korea is seeking to construct new medical facilities, normalize the production of medical supplies, and train medical experts, but the accomplishments seem to lag behind other areas.

□ North Korea's Active Response to the Global Spread of COVID-19: Priority Changes of 2020 National Political Agenda

- As the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) crisis is expected to prolong, North Korea has prioritized measures of sanitation, disease prevention, and healthcare over economic development for its 2020 national political agenda.
- After the outbreak of COVID-19, North Korea concentrated all its efforts to prevent the spread of the virus by allocating resources primarily to the services of sanitation, disease prevention, and healthcare.
- Chairman Kim assigned the construction of the Pyongyang General Hospital as the first priority of the 2020 agenda and urged all departments to concentrate their efforts to complete the construction by October 10th of this year, which marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

- A Proposal of Inter-Korean Cooperation in the Healthcare Area Under New Conditions: Support for the Construction of Pyongyang General Hospital and Gradual and Phased Expansion to Other Areas

- Given the current inter-Korean relations that needs improvement, new internal and external conditions require the healthcare area to be at the center of inter-Korean exchange and cooperation projects.

- To make a huge breakthrough in the inter-Korean relations that are now in stalemate, the South Korean government needs to propose new, innovative projects of the inter-Korean exchange and cooperation rather than waiting for conditions to improve.

- The North Korean project to build Pyongyang General Hospital is noteworthy in particular. South Korea should examine the possibility of launching a massive support project to provide medical supplies and personnel that are needed to build the hospital in coordination with the international community.

- If the project makes a result, it is expected to provide an opportunity to improve the inter-Korean relations as well as promoting the inter-Korean healthcare projects that have been discussed for a while. ❖

※ Translator's note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.