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Analysis of North Korean Top Leadership's Public Activities from December 2023 to February 2024

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This article comprehensively examines and analyzes public activities of the members of the Political Bureau (Politburo) Standing Committee of the Workers' Party, including Kim Jong-un, from December 2023 to February 2024. Additionally, it compares their public activities during the following periods before and after the 8th Party Congress: December 2020 to February 2021, December 2021 to February 2022, and December 2022 to February 2023.

North Korean Top Leadership's Public Activities in the Recent Three Months... 50% Increase Compared to the Previous Three Years

It appears that the North Korean top leadership, the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) of the Workers' Party of Korea including Kim Jong-un, engaged in a total of 54 public activities from December 2023 to February 2024. This represents a 50% increase (18 activities) compared to the average number of public activities during the previous three years (36 activities). The increase in public activities by the North

Korean top leadership is believed to be mainly influenced by the endemic phase of COVID-19.

<Table 1> North Korean Leadership’s Public Activity Trends: From December of each year to February of the following year since 2020

Category	Kim Jong-un	Kim Tok-hun	Choe Ryong-hae	Jo Yong-won	Total
Dec. 2020 ~ Feb. 2021	27	6	2	1	36
Dec. 2021 ~ Feb. 2022	22	9	7	0	38
Dec. 2022 ~ Feb. 2023	22	7	4	1	34
Three-year average	23.7	7.3	4.3	0.7	36
Dec. 2023 ~ Feb. 2024	31	13	8	2	54
Rate of increase or decrease compared to the three-year average	+31%	+77%	+85%	+200%	+50%

Source: The author based on North Korean media reports, etc.

Kim Jong-un, Increase in Public Activities in Military and Economy Sectors

When examining Kim Jong-un’s public activities from December 2023 to February 2024 by sector, it appears that he engaged in 9 activities in politics, 11 in the military, 5 in the economy, and 6 in others, totaling 31 activities. Comparing this to the number of public activities by sector during the previous three years, it is evident that while there was a slight decrease in activities in politics and others, there was a significant increase in activities in military and economy.

<Table 2> Kim Jong-un’s Public Activity Trends by Sector: From December of each year to February of the following year since 2020

Category	Politics	Military	Economy	Others	Total
Dec. 2020 ~ Feb. 2021	13	2	0	12	27
Dec. 2021 ~ Feb. 2022	9	4	3	6	22
Dec. 2022 ~ Feb. 2023	8	5	3	6	22
Three-year average	10	3.7	2	8	23.7
Dec. 2023 ~ Feb. 2024	9	11	5	6	31
Rate of increase or decrease compared to the three-year average	-10%	+200%	+150%	-25%	+31%

Source: The author based on North Korean media reports, etc.

The significant increase in Kim Jong-un's public activities in the military sector compared to the previous three years can be attributed to the rise in missile launches, on-site inspections of military factories, and visits paid to encourage the military from December 2023 to February 2024. It is noteworthy that Kim Jong-un's public engagements in the military sector amounted to 8 activities only in January and February 2024. During the 9th Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee held at the end of December 2023, Kim Jong-un claimed that inter-Korean relations had "completely fixed into relations between two states hostile to each other and the relations between two belligerent states." Through the 8 public activities conducted in the military sector from January to February 2024, Kim Jong-un emphasized the need for North Korea's military readiness and preparedness, bolstering military power, and enhancement of the capacity of the munitions industry.

Kim Jong-un's public activities in the economic sector from December 2023 to February 2024 also increased compared to the previous three years. This appears to be associated with Kim Jong-un's newly proposed '20x10 Regional Development Policy' presented during the 10th session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly on January 16, 2024. Kim Jong-un's visits to local regions for economic development purposes at the beginning and the end of a year were limited to the construction site of the Ryongpo Namseonshil Greenhouse Farm (Hamju County, South Hamgyong Province), which were the only instances among his public activities during the same period in the past three years that occurred once in January and February 2022.

Kim Tok-hun Encouraged the Promotion of '20x10 Regional Development Policy' through On-Site Inspection

In the past three months, Kim Tok-hun's public activities amounted to 13, showing a 77% increase compared to the average of the previous three years. This increase appears to be attributable to his frequent visits to economic development sites as the Premier of the Cabinet, often referred to as the 'economic control tower' in North Korea. Following Kim Jong-un's introduction of the '20x10 Regional Development Policy,' Kim Tok-hun has been inspecting local factories, enterprises, and

government projects associated with the policy.

<Table 3> Details of Kim Tok-hun · Choe Ryong-hae · Jo Yong-won’s Public Activity Trends:
From December of each year to February of the following year since 2020

Category	Kim Tok-hun			Choe Ryong-hae				Jo Yong-won			Total
	Economy	Others	Sub-total	Politics	Economy	Others	Sub-total	Politics	Economy	Sub-total	
Dec. 2020 ~ Feb. 2021	6	0	6	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	9
Dec. 2021 ~ Feb. 2022	8	1	9	4	2	1	7	0	0	0	16
Dec. 2022 ~ Feb. 2023	7	0	7	3	1	0	4	1	0	1	12
Three-year average	7	0.3	7.3	3	1	0.3	4.3	0.7	0	0.7	12.3
Dec. 2023 ~ Feb. 2024	12	1	13	3	2	3	8	1	1	2	23
Rate of increase or decrease compared to the three-year average	+71%	+200%	+77%	0	+100%	+800%	+85%	+42.9%	-	+200%	+87%

Source: The author based on North Korean media reports, etc.

Increase in Choe Ryong-hae’s Diplomatic Activities … Attention Warranted to Jo Yong-won’s Economic Activities

In the case of Choe Ryong-hae, it appears that the increase in public activities in the others sector has influenced the overall increase in public activities. Diplomatic activity, which occurred only once in the previous three years, increased to two (the appointment of Ambassador of Cuba and Ambassador of Mongolia to North Korea) during the period of December 2023 to February 2024.

As for Jo Yong-won who also serves as the Deputy Chief of the Workers’ Party of Korea, it seems inappropriate to assign significance to the changes in his activities since the number of public activities that can be confirmed through North Korean media is very limited. However, it is noteworthy that one public activity that he made was observed. It was Jo Yong-won’s attendance at the completion ceremony of Naepyong 3 Power Plant (Yuyol-ri, Sepo County, Kangwon Province). This was



featured as a headline on the front page of the *Rodong Sinmun* the following day, with Jo Yong-won's attendance at the completion ceremony mentioned in a separate paragraph before introducing the list of other attendees. This can be seen as a symbol of Jo Yong-won's special status in North Korea. ©KINU 2024

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