

## **KIM JONG IL STEPS UP ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

Of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's public appearances during the first half of the year, fully half of them were to military installations or other defense-related sites, making it the most frequented sector, but compared to previous years, the number of visits to sites related to the economy rose considerably.

According to North Korean media sources, from January through June, Kim Jong Il made a total of 49 public visits. Of these, 25 (51%) were to military facilities, while 15 (31%) were to factories, cooperative farms, and other sites related to the nation's economy. 3 (6%) public appearances were meetings with foreign dignitaries, and 6 (12%) were to public performances and other events.

In January, Kim made five on-site visits to economically important areas, after which there was a lull until May, when Kim appeared at six sites, and then made another 4 economy-related visits in June. In July, Kim has already made three visits to Jangan and North Pyongan Provinces, showing up at production facilities in those areas.

Between January and July of 2007, Kim made only six visits to sites related to the economic sector, less than a third the number of visits this year. In fact, with only 19 site visits for all of 2007, Kim's appearances in the first half of this year have almost surpassed last year's total, which itself was an increase over the 16 visits made in 2006.

The first public appearance made by Kim Jong Il in 2008 was at the Yaesung River Power Plant construction site on January 6, and was followed up by an appearance on January 21 the '18<sup>th</sup>

National Program Contest and Exhibition’, emphasizing the government’s drive to resolve economic difficulties.

In the same month, Kim Jong Il visited a poultry and pork processing plant, a mushroom plant, a food processing facility, a rabbit breeding farm, and a youth mine, directly inspecting sites related to the lives and livelihoods of the people, appearing to emphasize the slogan announced in this year’s New Year’s Joint Declaration, “Prioritization of the People’s Lives”. Kim’s ‘economic walk’ was seemingly put on hold by a flurry of negotiations between the United States and North Korea regarding the North’s declaration of its nuclear programs and the attempt by the new South Korean government’s revamped policy towards North Korea between February and April, but then regained traction in May, with a visit on the 4<sup>th</sup> to a mountain orchard in Kangwon Province.

This year, Kim Jong Il’s on-site instructions at facilities related to building the economy and improving the lives of the people appear to be focused on stressing the need to resolve food shortages and ensure that everyone is fed.