

Beat: Miscellaneous

North Korea to hold parliamentary session next month

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USPA News - North Korea will convene an annual session of parliament next month, state-run media reported on Thursday, amidst reports that the reclusive country under new leader Kim Jong-un may announce new economic and foreign policy goals at the gathering. A brief dispatch from the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly decided Wednesday to convene a full session of parliament in the capital Pyongyang on April 1. The report did not say what would be discussed at the parliamentary session.

The North's parliament meets annually to adopt the state budget, approve important appointments and amendments, and to make formal announcements. The parliament last met during an unusual second session in September, passing a law that added one year of compulsory education for children. Held at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang, the gathering next month will be the seventh session of North Korea's 12th parliament, which was formed in 2009 and consists of 687 legislators. KCNA said delegates will be required to register for the session on March 30 or March 31. Yonhap, a South Korean news agency, said observers believe that North Korea may use the parliamentary session to announce new economic reform measures or a foreign policy message. It will take place as tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at critical after North Korea's recent nuclear test. Kim Jong-un was promoted to Supreme Leader in December 2011 to lead the impoverished and secretive country. It came days after his father, Kim Jong-il, died on December 17 after suffering an `advanced, acute myocardial infarction, complicated with a heart shock,` while on a train for a `field guidance tour`. Little is known about Kim Jong-un, who was educated in Switzerland and is believed to be in his late 20s, making him the youngest head of state in the world. He reportedly resembles his father the most and has always been the favorite among his three sons, but the sudden death of Kim Jong-il left the North Korean government with little time to prepare him.

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