

**LEADERSHIP RESHUFFLE
IN NORTH KOREA:
FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

BO Zhiyue

EAI Background Brief No. 547

Date of Publication: 28 July 2010

Executive Summary

1. At the third session of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) held on 7 June 2010, North Korea (officially known as Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) had another major leadership reshuffle.
2. Jang Song-thaek, Kim Jong-il's brother-in-law and director of administration of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), was promoted to vice chairman of the National Defense Commission, North Korea's supreme power body.
3. Choe Yong-rim, KWP chief in Pyongyang and former Chief Public Prosecutor, became the country's premier instead of Kim Yong-il who was probably ousted because of failed currency reforms.
4. In addition, six people, including two women, were appointed as vice premiers. Members of the new cabinet are not young. With a few exceptions, they are all in their 70s and 80s.
5. In fact, these were only a part of leadership reshuffles in the first half of 2010. Prior to the third session of the 12th SPA, eleven members of North Korea's leadership had been replaced. These eleven people passed away, died of car accidents or otherwise mysteriously disappeared.
6. All these changes seem to have been made to pave the way for Kim Jong-il's youngest son, Kim Jong-un, to take over the helm in 2012 when the KWP holds its Seventh Party Congress after 32 years.