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Unification Church delegates did not discuss inter-Korean ties

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A delegation of Unification Church officials who visited North Korea to accept condolences over the death of church founder Rev. Moon Sun-myung did not discuss inter-Korean ties with the North during their two-day stay in the communist country, a church-affiliated businessman said Saturday.

The delegation, including Moon's seventh and youngest son, Hyung Jin Moon, and Park Sang-kwon, the president of the church-invested Pyeonghwa Motors in North Korea, returned to South Korea through the South's border city of Paju earlier in the day, after receiving condolence calls from the late founder's relatives in the North and top North Korean officials.

The late Moon died of pneumonia at his religious town northeast of Seoul on Monday at the age of 92. A native of what is now North Korea, Moon built close personal ties with the North's late founding leader, Kim Il-Sung, which led his church to invest in automaking and tourism projects in the isolated country.

During the visit, the North mourned Moon's death by sending a condolence wreath in the name of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and awarding the late founder with a posthumous prize recognizing his contribution to inter-Korean reconciliation and unity.

Speaking to reporters at an inter-Korean immigration office in Paju, Park, the Korean-American businessman, said the visit had no other purpose than to accept the condolences of mourners.

"There were no discussions at all with the North regarding inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation, (the South's) flood aid (to the North) or political issues," he said.

The North Korean leader sent a message expressing his sadness over Moon's death through his powerful uncle Jang Song-thaek, who read out the message in person, he added.

"(The message said Kim Jong-un) will not be able to forget the relationship between Rev. Moon and (late North Korean leader) Kim Il-sung," Park said. "(The message) also said (Kim) is heartbroken (over Moon's death)."

Moon Hyung-jin, the son and heir to the late church founder, also told reporters about the grief his relatives in the North felt over his father's death.

"My grandmother and aunt cried a lot," he said. "My relatives were in much grief."

The church has said about 70 relatives of the late founder, including his younger sister, currently live in his hometown of Jongju, North Pyongan Province.

Park also said the North expressed its willingness to welcome a visit by Moon's widow, Han Hak-ja. (Yonhap)