



Paegam is a county seat in Ryanggang Province. Its 2021 estimated population is 75,050.

Paegam sits at an elevation of 1,120 meters in a depression of the Paektu Plateau. Surrounded by mountains up to 1,900 meters high, the area is heavily forested and experiences very cold winters. The Sodusu River flows through town, north toward the large Taehongdan tablelands and eventually flowing into the Tumen River.

This remote area has never been heavily populated and had been within the domain of various Jurchen tribes in the pre-dynastic Korea period. Switching hands between Korean and Chinese dynasties, it eventually became permanently Korean in the Goryeo era.

Paegam became part of Ryanggang Province in 1954 and its current administrative boundaries were set in 1990.

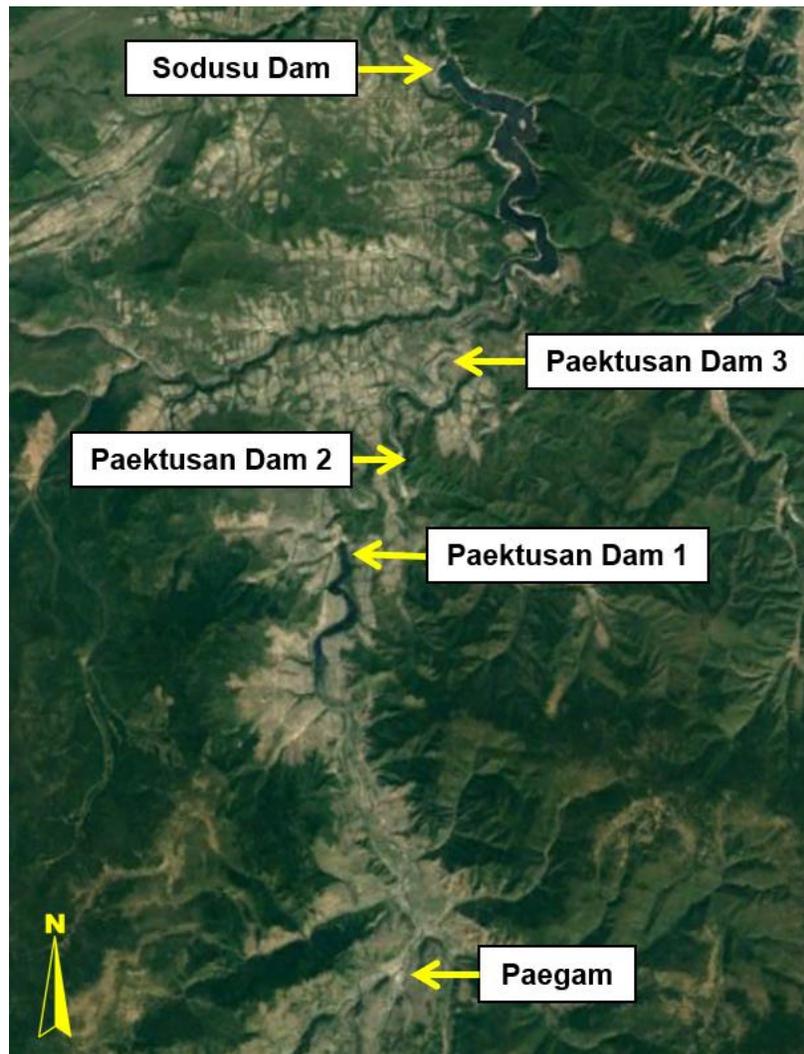
Economy

The economy is based on timber and agriculture (particularly potatoes and livestock). There are a few small mines in the area, but nothing major. Paegam's logging activities are supported by a narrow-gauge railroad used just for transporting timber from the county's interior to the main national railway and to Paegam's own lumber facility (41.565353° 128.795659°).

Paegam's market is 1,160 sq. m. in size and has not grown since 2010.

The Sodusu River provides an opportunity for hydroelectric power and from 2009-2016, the Paektusan Hero Youth Power Stations were constructed. The first hydroelectric dam created a reservoir up to 11 km long, the second dam created a smaller reservoir that's only 1 km long, and the third dam's reservoir is about 2.5 km long. In 2016, the tunnel carrying water from the first hydroelectric dam to its power

generating station burst, releasing large amounts of water back into the river and creating a debris field of 59,000 sq. meters. The damage was repaired soon after.



There is also the Sodusu Hydroelectric Dam (41.882422° 128.837137°). Built prior to 1984, it is the largest dam on the river by volume. Based on Landsat imagery, it's possible that either the weight of the dam and reservoir or water leaking through the bedrock (due to bad design and construction) led to an apparent landslide ca. 1987, followed by another one ca. 1991.

The construction of the Paektusan Hero Youth Power Stations required the Paengmu Rail Line to be moved, as the original route would become flooded. 17.7 km of old railway was removed and the line was shifted slightly westward. The new line is 24.2 km long because it is forced to take a less direct route between the village of Kulsong (41.590964° 128.817416°) and Chonsu Station (41.723141° 128.776322°). Two new train stations were also constructed along its path at 41.662096° 128.748386° and 41.628709° 128.793751° .

There hasn't been a lot of construction in recent years in the town of Paegam itself other than the addition of 36 housing units built between 2018 and 2022. Other populated places within the county have also seen building activity. In Yuphyong-dong (41.766434° 128.829707°) seventy-four new homes

were built in two new neighborhoods. Twelve houses were built as part of the construction of Paektusan Hero Youth Power Station No. 3, and other smaller changes were made to villages along the river due to the construction of the dams.

Paegam is home to a forestry college; however, few other places within town have been positively identified.

The county's [COVID isolation facility](#) is located at 41.562232° 128.798195°.

Military

There are no substantial military sites within the county. A possible garrison exists at 41.575291° 128.839225° along with a small underground site less than a kilometer to the south.

There is a grass airfield (41.943954° 128.850723°) named after Paegam, but it is actually located in Taehongdan County.

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Jacob Bogle, July 2021 (updated October 2023)

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