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## **NO FORMAL REQUESTS FROM US, NORTH KOREA TO HOST TRUMP-KIM MEETING IN SINGAPORE: PM LEE**

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Could Singapore host a meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump?

Speaking at a press conference at the close of the 32nd ASEAN Summit on Saturday (Apr 28), Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said: "We've also read the same reports as you in the newspapers about the possible places where the US-North Korea meeting can take place. We've had no formal invitations, requests from any of the parties.

"It has to be something agreed by both North Korea as well as the United States. I doubt very much they have come to any landing yet."

A South Korean daily had earlier reported that Singapore and Mongolia have been shortlisted to host a summit between Mr Trump and Mr Kim. Thailand has volunteered itself as a venue as well.

Mr Kim met South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday. Both promised to bring "lasting peace" between the two Koreas, and to work towards complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

"It's good that the North and South Koreans met, it's good that President Donald Trump is about to meet Mr Kim Jong Un," said Mr Lee, adding: "The question is how things move forward."

### **SITUATION IN KOREA POSITIVE, DESPITE "MANY DIFFICULT ISSUES"**

Mr Lee added that ASEAN's assessment of the situation in the Korean peninsula is a positive one. But he also pointed out that there are many difficult issues to deal with.

"This is an issue with a very long history ... and a cycle of tensions and mistrust has built up over a long period of time, he said. There is a very deep concern on each side that the other side does not mean it well, therefore to overcome that, you do have to take the first step. But the first step is the first of many, and the subsequent steps will not be easy."

He added that beyond trust, decisions also have to be made and commitments have to be undertaken, and they involve many parties whose interests are not completely aligned".

Everybody says they want complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation," he said. But what does it mean ... what are the conditions, how do we verify it, enforce it ... what happens if its breached?"

"So it's a positive step, it's better than firing missiles and testing bombs, said Mr Lee. We will wait and see, and we can only hope for the best."

In terms of what ASEAN can do, Mr Lee pointed out that the grouping "does not have levers".

He said that ASEAN can comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions, and do its part to make sure sanctions agreed by the international community are enforced and complied with.

ASEAN, he said, can also make sure that it adds its voice to the international discourse to "add moral pressure". But beyond that, ASEANS leverage is limited.

"I think the first thing we need to understand is thats the reality," he said.

ASEAN foreign ministers earlier issued a statement to say that it welcomed the inter-Korean Summit.

"The ministers are encouraged by these positive developments and urge all concerned parties to work towards reducing tensions, and the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula which will contribute to the peace and stability of the region," it said.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/asean-singapore-north-south-korea-host-trump-kim-meeting-10184778>

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