
LEADERS OF NORTH, SOUTH KOREA TO MEET IN PYONGYANG

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North and South Korea agreed to hold a summit in Pyongyang in the coming weeks, in what would be the third meeting this year between the leaders of the two Koreas.

The summit, which was announced in a brief statement issued by both Koreas following high-level talks on Monday, comes amid concerns about an impasse in engagement efforts with North Korea that began earlier this year.

The meeting, which will be held in September, according to the joint statement, follows through on an agreement reached by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in in April, when the two leaders met for the first time this year.

At the time, they had agreed to meet again in Pyongyang in the fall, without specifying a date. Pyongyang served as the venue for the first two inter-Korean summits, in 2000 and 2007.

Monday's agreement followed four hours of talks at the Panmunjom truce village at the inter-Korean demilitarized zone.

I believe today's meeting was positive, said Cho Myoung-gyon, South Korea's Unification Minister and Seoul's chief delegate at the talks, adding that the two sides had discussed the setting up of an inter-Korean liaison office, military agreements and exchanges on sports and infrastructure.

North Korea's chief delegate, Ri Son Gwon, said he thought it very important that both sides do their part in pushing through the agreements, in an apparent reference to the joint statements that followed Mr. Kim's first meetings with Mr. Moon and President Trump this year.

While North Korea says it has destroyed its nuclear test site, halted missile launches and returned the remains of U.S. soldiers killed during the Korean War, the U.S. has yet to lift sanctions that would allow for more economic activity by Pyongyang.

The U.S. has halted annual military exercises, a longtime irritant to North Korea, but says it wants to see more concrete progress from Pyongyang on denuclearization before loosening sanctions.

In what appeared to be a subtle expression of Pyongyang's frustration at the perceived deadlock, Mr. Ri said he hoped that South Korean officials will do what is necessary without me talking more.

The logjam in U.S.-North Korea talks has put on hold hopes of reviving a jointly operated tourist resort and factory complex, both on the north side of the DMZ. The two projects were shuttered by South Korea's previous conservative governments.

Although Monday's talks didn't set a fixed agenda for the coming summit meeting, South Korean officials are expected to discuss ways to keep alive planning for more economic cooperation, and to negotiate ways of easing military tensions on the heavily guarded inter-Korean border.

Monday's agreement shows the two Koreas can't progress further in their agreements without a more concrete deal between Pyongyang and Washington, said Kim Joon-hyung, a professor of international politics at Handong Global University in Pohang, South Korea.

Mr. Kim added that the reason for the lack of a specific date was likely because of a number of other important dates in the calendar in September, including the 70th anniversary of North Korea's foundation on Sept. 9 and the U.N. General Assembly toward the end of the month.

Monday's inter-Korean talks began in a friendly manner. Mr. Ri, the North's chief delegate, said he felt that inter-Korean relations were at a watershed moment after a period of tension last year.

Mr. Cho, his South Korean counterpart, made a reference to inter-Korean basketball and canoe teams that are set to participate in this month's Asian Games in Indonesia.

I recall the North Korean adage that being in the same boat means sharing the same mind-set, Mr. Cho said.

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