
NORTH KOREA ENVOY TELLS DELEGATES FROM TOKYO THAT TIES WITH JAPAN GOING 'FROM BAD TO WORSE'

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North Korea's ambassador for negotiations to normalize relations with Japan told a visiting Japanese delegation on Wednesday that ties between the two countries have been going from bad to worse rather than becoming normal, during a meeting in Pyongyang.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has recently expressed enthusiasm to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un without conditions, but Song Il Hos remarks suggest that Pyongyang has little intention of holding a summit with Tokyo in the near future.

The delegation was led by Shingo Kanemaru, the second son of Shin Kanemaru – a late lawmaker who worked toward the establishment of diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang in the 1990s.

We will make constant efforts to develop friendly ties with any country who respects our nation's autonomy, including Japan, Song also said, while emphasizing North Korea's achievements of economic construction and defense buildup.

Kanemaru has been visiting North Korea since Saturday with officials of his home prefecture of Yamanashi. On Tuesday, a celebration was held to mark what would have been the 105th birthday of Shin Kanemaru.

The delegations' visit comes after comments from Abe that he himself would need to face Chairman Kim without conditions in order to resolve the issue of abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s, although the prime minister had also indicated that a future summit with Kim would not be possible without any guarantee of progress.

Japan officially lists 17 people as abductees, five of whom were repatriated in 2002, and suspects North Korea's involvement in many more disappearances. Pyongyang has argued that the abduction issue is already resolved.

In 1990, Shin Kanemaru co-headed a bipartisan delegation that went to North Korea. His Liberal Democratic Party and the Japan Socialist Party signed a joint declaration with the ruling Workers Party of Korea calling for the need to normalize diplomatic relations.

The elder Kanemaru, who died in 1996 at age 81, held talks with North Korean leader Kim Il Sung.

Kim Il Sung was the countrys founder and Kim Jong Uns grandfather.

Shingo Kanemaru served as his fathers secretary and was deeply involved in the negotiations at the time. Since then he has frequently visited North Korea. He also made a trip to North Korea and met with Song in October of last year.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/09/19/national/politics-diplomacy/north-korea-ties-japan-bad-to-worse/#.XYMvLkYzY2w>

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