

Relations between north and south korea



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North Korea has accepted South Korea's proposal for official talks in what will be the first high-level contact between the two countries in more than two years. North and South Korean athletes will march together at the Winter Olympics opening ceremony under a unified flag, the South said Wednesday, in a diplomatic breakthrough following days of talks between the two countries. The nations have also agreed to form a joint North and South Korean women's ice hockey team for the Games in Pyeongchang, which begin early next month, South Korea's unification ministry said. The unification ministry announced a range of joint activities between the countries for the Games, following talks Wednesday at the demilitarized zone (DMZ). North and South Korean skiers will train together at a resort in North Korea before the Olympics start, and performers from the two countries will also hold a joint cultural event at Mount Kumgang. North Korea will also send around 230 supporters to cheer on its athletes. A smaller delegation of North Korean athletes and supporters will attend the Paralympics, the ministry said.

The Korean Unification Flag features a blue silhouette of the peninsula and outlying islands. The two countries have marched under the flag before, in rare shows of unity, first at the 1991 World Table Tennis Championships, and at a number of sporting events since. It was most recently used at the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy. The International Olympics Committee (IOC) would need to approve the countries' agreements, and those that affect competition, such as the joint hockey team, could be more complicated than the ceremonial proposals. The committee said Wednesday it had received a number of "interesting proposals" that it would discuss with delegates from

both countries in Switzerland on Saturday.” We are sure that the two Korean delegations will present their ideas and proposals at the meeting on Saturday in Lausanne. This will then enable the IOC to carefully evaluate the consequences and the potential impact on the Olympic Games and the Olympic competitions”, it said in a statement.

While the two sides have earned praise for ratcheting down military tensions in recent weeks, some of Seoul’s allies voiced concern Wednesday that Pyongyang may be using the talks to buy time to pursue its weapons program. The US military has moved more firepower to the region and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned of complacency at a Tuesday summit in Vancouver where the top diplomats from the United States, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom were in town to discuss North Korea.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono called on the international community to be clear-eyed about North Korea’s motivations for participating in the talks, which have been hailed by some as the most significant thaw in ties in years. “ Both Koreas are primarily utilizing the talks for a limited objective arranging the participation of a North Korean delegation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics”, Park said.

South Korea’s Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said the talks were a “ significant step” but acknowledged the serious challenges ahead: “ Despite these overtures to improve relations with the South, North Korea has yet to show any intention to fulfill its international obligations regarding denuclearization. “ North Korea has remained adamant throughout this month’s thaw in relations with South Korea that its nuclear bombs and

ballistic missiles are here to stay. Kim Hee Ryung, who works at a tourism information kiosk in Gangneung, the city which will be hosting the ice sports at the Games, complained: “ They didn’t really consider the South Korean players. They prepared for years to be in the Olympics but now they cannot play. Female hockey players from the rival Koreas were paired up with each other Thursday to form their first-ever Olympic squad during next month’s Pyeongchang Winter Games, as their countries press ahead with rare reconciliation steps following a period of nuclear tensions. It added that joint military drills with “ outside forces” were unhelpful when better relations between North and South Korea were being sought. It came as the North’s ice hockey team – dressed in DPRK jackets – crossed the militarised border to form Korea’s first-ever unified team for next month’s Winter Olympics. North and South Korea will march under one flag as the joint team competes in Pyeongchang.

The Unification Flag, which features the entire peninsula and surrounding islands in blue on a white background, was last used in 2006 at the Winter Olympics in Italy. Athletes from the North and South will march together under one flag at the opening ceremony for the Games in Pyeongchang, which begin February 9. Athletes from North Korea will also participate in the Winter Olympics in South Korea next month. The proposals from North and South Korea had to be approved by the IOC and Pyeongchang committee before they could go ahead.

North Korea will send 22 athletes who will compete in three sports, Bach said, following a meeting between delegations from the two Koreas and Olympic officials in Lausanne, Switzerland. Of the 22 North Korean athletes,
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15 will be women and seven will be men, the IOC said. They will be accompanied by 24 coaches and 21 media representatives. Female hockey players from the rival Koreas were paired up with each other Thursday to form their first-ever Olympic squad during next month's Pyeongchang Winter Games, as their countries press ahead with rare reconciliation steps following a period of nuclear tensions." This team will enter the Olympic Stadium under the Korean unification flag. I'm sure that this will be a very emotional moment not only for all Koreans but also for the entire world", Bach said. He also confirmed that, for the first time in Olympic history, the two nations will enter a joint women's ice hockey team under the name Korea. The athletes will compete in ice hockey, ice skating and skiing across five disciplines: ice hockey, figure skating, short track speed skating, cross-country skiing and alpine skiing says the IOC. Bach said reaching this outcome " Was not an easy journey" but that he was proud of what the representatives of the two Koreas, the IOC and the Pyeongchang 2018 Organizing Committee had achieved their goal.

A dozen North Korean hockey players wearing white-and-red winter clothes crossed the heavily fortified border into South Korea earlier Thursday, as about 30-40 conservative activists shouted anti-Pyongyang slogans at a nearby border area. The North Koreans traveled on to a national athletes' village in southern South Korea, where they were welcomed by their South Korean teammates and their Canadian coach Sarah Murray, who presented them flower bouquets in an outdoor welcoming ceremony. Pak Chol Ho, a North Korean coach who arrived with the 12 athletes and two support staff, told reporters that he's happy to team up with South Koreans. " I'm very

pleased with the fact that North and South are united as one to participate in the Olympics. I expect we'll see good results if we unite our efforts though we don't have much time", he said. The Koreas fielded a single team to major sports events only twice, both in 1991. One event was the world table tennis championships and the other soccer's World Youth Championship. But this is the first time they've assembled a single team for the Olympics.

The Koreas explored how to cooperate in the Olympics after the North's leader Kim Jong Un abruptly said in his New Year's address that he was willing to send an Olympic delegation. The International Olympic Committee has allowed 22 North Korean athletes, including the 12 hockey players, to compete in Pyeongchang in exceptional entries given to the North, which initially had none for the games. The joint hockey team deal has triggered a backlash in South Korea, with a survey showing about 70 percent of respondents opposing the idea because it would deprive South Korean players of playing time. The IOC-brokered agreement requires at least three North Korean players to suit up for each game, meaning that three from South Korea's original roster cannot play in those games. The unified Korean team will open their group action against Switzerland on Feb. 10. It will then face Sweden on Feb. 12 and Japan on Feb. 14. What draws attention is its Japan match, as many in both Koreas still harbor bitter resentment against Japan's 35-year colonial rule that ended in 1945, three years before two different governments were formally established on the Korean Peninsula.

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North Korea will also send around 230 supporters to cheer on its athletes. A smaller delegation of North Korean athletes and supporters will attend the Paralympics, the ministry said. South Korean supporters wave unified flags at the World Student Games in August 2003 in Daegu, South Korea. The Korean Unification Flag features a blue silhouette of the peninsula and outlying islands. The two countries have marched under the flag before, in rare shows of unity, first at the 1991 World Table Tennis Championships, and at a number of sporting events since. It was most recently used at the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy. The International Olympics Committee (IOC) would need to approve the countries' agreements, and those that affect competition, such as the joint hockey team, could be more complicated than the ceremonial proposals.