

2 Koreas Talk At Border On Stalled Industrial Park

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SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Delegates from North and South Korea held talks Saturday on restarting a [stalled joint factory park](#) [1] that had been a symbol of cooperation between the bitter rivals, but there was no word on whether any significant progress had been made as discussions went into the night.

The Kaesong industrial zone, just north of the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas, was the centerpiece of inter-Korean projects hatched during a previous era of warming ties. But it was closed in April as tensions rose between the rivals when South Korea held military exercises with U.S. troops not far from the border. North Korea pulled its 53,000 workers out of the industrial park, and South Korea then ordered its managers to leave as well, against their wishes.

Representatives from the two sides met Saturday in the truce village of Panmunjom inside the DMZ for working-level talks. A delegate from South Korea's Unification Ministry, which is in charge of relations with the North, said before leaving Seoul that the sides would discuss retrieving products that the South Korean managers left behind at the complex and inspecting the facilities. They also agreed to discuss restarting work at the park.

The talks started just before noon, and were still going on Saturday evening.

South Korean businessman Han Jae-kwon, president of an emergency committee for restarting the park, said he was watching for news on the talks' results at his home in the southern city of Daegu.

"I hope they could narrow their differences," he said.

The park, which brought together North Korean labor and South Korean capital, resulted in nearly \$2 billion a year in cross-border trade before its shutdown. It was the last remaining joint project between the two Koreas as relations soured over the past five years.

As the park remained shuttered, South Korean businesses that operated in Kaesong sought rescue funds from the government. Some South Korean businesspeople who were forced to leave their Kaesong factories behind sent a message to government officials near the border city of Paju as they headed to the talks Saturday, holding placards that read "We want to work."

The closure meant a loss of salary for tens of thousands of North Korean workers employed in factories run by 123 South Korean companies, and a loss of goods and orders for business managers who relied on Kaesong to churn out everything from

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shoes and watches to cables and electrical components.

Saturday's talks came after a protocol disagreement last month resulted in the Koreas calling off what would have been the first senior-level meeting in years.

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