

Koreas End Talks On Factories With No Breakthrough

Hyung-Jin Kim, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — [Talks](#) [1] between the rival Koreas aimed at restarting a [stalled inter-Korean factory park](#) [2] ended Wednesday with no breakthrough, but both sides agreed to meet again next week to discuss restoring what was once a rare symbol of cooperation between the archrivals.

They also agreed to a separate set of talks next week on allowing reunions of families that have been separated for decades by the border between North and South Korea, Seoul's Unification Ministry said in a statement. The ministry said Seoul rejected a proposal from North Korea to discuss resumption of South Korean tours to a North Korean mountain.

The Kaesong industrial complex in North Korea, located just over the heavily armed border dividing the two countries, closed in April following North Korea's angry [reaction](#) [3] to South Korea's annual military exercises with the United States and alleged insults against the North's top leadership.

North Korea has in recent weeks ratcheted down its warlike threats and pursued diplomacy with both Seoul and Washington, though it has not pulled back on its nuclear weapons development as the U.S., South Korea and other nations demand.

The two Koreas recently agreed on a desire to reopen the complex, but they are still discussing how to do that.

During Wednesday's talks at Kaesong, the rivals again shared the view that the factory complex should be maintained and developed, chief Seoul delegate Suh Ho told South Korean reporters after the meeting, according to media pool reports. He said the two sides agreed to meet in Kaesong again on Monday.

The Unification Ministry said North Korea proposed additional working-level talks next week — on reunions and the resumption of tours to the Diamond Mountain resort — via an inter-Korean communication channel at the border village of Panmunjom.

The ministry said Seoul accepted the offer on reunions because of the urgency of that issue, but rejected the offer on mountain tours because it wants to keep the focus on the factory park. It said the Kaesong complex's restart will be a "touchstone for South-North Korean exchange and cooperation."

Pyongyang wants the talks on separated families to be held at the mountain or Kaesong, but Seoul made a counterproposal to hold them in the border village of Panmunjom, the ministry said.

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Also on Wednesday, South Korean representatives of factories that operated at Kaesong visited the complex and inspected equipment that they're worried could be ruined during the rainy season currently pounding the Korean Peninsula.

Kim Hak-kwon, a member of a committee pushing for Kaesong's restoration, said humidity had damaged a lot of equipment. More than 10 South Korean workers should spend three to four weeks in Kaesong repairing and maintaining machines, Kim said.

The complex combined South Korean know-how and capital with cheap North Korean labor, and was the centerpiece of cross-border cooperation projects hatched during a previous era of warming ties. Other joint projects between the two Koreas closed as relations soured over the past five years.

North Korea in April [pulled](#) [4]its 53,000 workers out of the industrial park, and South Korea then ordered its managers to leave as well, against their wishes.

The park resulted in nearly \$2 billion a year in cross-border trade before its shutdown.

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 shoes and watches to cables and electrical components.

The Korean Peninsula officially remains at war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

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