

# Seoul: No Kor to send delegation to Olympics

SEOUL (AP) — North Korea agreed yesterday to send a delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea, Seoul officials said, as the bitter rivals sat for rare talks at the border to discuss how to cooperate in the Olympics and improve their long-strained ties.



Head of the North Korean delegation Ri Son-gwon (right) greets his South Korean counterpart Cho Myoung-gyon before their meeting at the truce village of Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas yesterday. REUTERS

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The Koreans' first talks in two years were arranged after North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un recently made an abrupt push for improved ties with South Korea after a year of elevated tensions with the outside world over his expanding nuclear and missile programs. Critics said Kim may be trying to divide Seoul and Washington in a bid to weaken international pressure and sanctions on the North.

During the talks, the North Korean delegation said it would send an Olympic delegation, which includes officials, athletes, cheerleaders,

journalists and others, South Korea's Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung told reporters, according to media footage from the border village of Panmunjom, the venue for the talks.

The South Korean delegation, for its part, proposed North Korea send a big delegation and conduct a joint march during the Feb. 9-25 game's opening and closing ceremonies, Chun,

one of the five South Korean negotiators, said.

He said South Korea also suggested resuming temporary reunions of families separated by war and offering mili-

tary talks designed to reduce animosities in frontline areas. South Korea also stressed the need to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Chun said.

North Korea responded by saying the two Koreas must try to promote peace and reconciliation through dialogue, he said.

The meeting began with an amicable atmosphere yesterday morning, with chief North Korean delegate Ri Songwon saying he hopes the talks would give "a New Year's first gift — precious results (of the talks) to the Korean nation."

Ri's South Korean counterpart, Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, said he also hopes they would come up with a "good gift" for people in both Koreas.