

Two Koreas will Hold Official Talks Next Week



Seoul, January 5 (RHC-Agencies)- - North Korea agreed on Friday to hold official talks with the South next week, the first in more than two years, hours after the United States and South Korea delayed a military exercise amid a standoff over the North's nuclear and missile programs.

South Korea said the North had sent its consent for the talks to be held on Tuesday. The last time the two Koreas engaged in official talks was in December 2015.

The meeting will take place at the border truce village of Panmunjom, inside the demilitarized zone (DMZ) , where officials from both sides are expected to discuss the Winter Olympics, to be held in the South next month, and other inter-Korean relations, South Korean Unification Ministry spokesman Baik Tae-hyun told reporters.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un opened the way for talks with South Korea in a New Year's Day speech in which he called for reduced tensions and flagged the North's possible participation in the Winter Olympics.

But Kim remained steadfast on the issue of nuclear weapons, saying the North would mass produce nuclear missiles for operational deployment and again warned he would launch a nuclear strike if his country was threatened.

U.S. President Donald Trump and his South Korean counterpart Moon Jae-in announced on Thursday that annual large-scale military drills would now take place after the Olympics.

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