

## Korean thaw: on US-North Korea relations

The summit between the leaders of the two Koreas is perhaps the most significant step in decades towards securing peace on the peninsula. Kim Jong-un on Friday became the first North Korean leader since the 1953 armistice [to step on South Korean soil](#). Not many had foreseen such a rapid turnaround in ties between the two Koreas, given the acrimony and war rhetoric of the recent past. Mr. Kim had stepped up his country's nuclear weapons programme since assuming power in 2011. Last year, U.S. President Donald Trump and he even exchanged nuclear threats. But it has become evident that Mr. Kim's primary goal may not be to maintain the North's nuclear capability or to live in a perpetually hostile environment. He has signalled that he is willing to barter the North's nuclear capability for economic and security assurances. At their summit, Mr. Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, whose persistence in breaking the ice was vital to the historic meeting, spared no words in expressing their desire for peace in a "nuclear-free" peninsula. They declared that there would be no more war on the peninsula. There are plans to transform the existing armistice into a peace treaty with the help of the U.S. and China, to formally end the Korean war by year-end.

### North Korea's neighbours, Trump hail historic summit

The significance of the summit notwithstanding, peace is not a given. In the past, two South Korean Presidents had travelled to the North to meet its leader. The 2007 joint declaration after an inter-Korean summit had expressed almost similar goals as in the latest declaration, including on the nuclear issue. Yet relations deteriorated, with the international peace process failing to make any progress and the North going back to its nuclear weapons programme. What is different this time is that the inter-Korean summit is to be followed by a meeting between Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump. Mr. Kim first conveyed the promise of denuclearisation through visiting South Korean officials. And then he travelled to China to discuss the proposal with President Xi Jinping before meeting Mr. Moon. He announced a freeze on further nuclear tests and said North Korea's main test site would be shut down, all aimed to show his seriousness of purpose. Mr. Trump has welcomed the Panmunjom summit and said that he expects to meet Mr. Kim within four weeks. Despite his promises, Mr. Kim is unlikely to give up his nuclear weapons unless he gets credible guarantees from the U.S., China and other countries. He is likely to also press the U.S. to withdraw its nuclear umbrella from the South. But it is quite extraordinary to think that Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim may actually now get down to discussing, face-to-face, steps towards denuclearising the Korean peninsula.

Receive the best of The Hindu delivered to your inbox everyday!

Please enter a valid email address.

On Kathua, the BJP is presenting one narrative to Jammu, another to the rest of India

The revival of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, sans U.S., must buttress the free trade debate

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](#)