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President Moon Jae-in smiles as U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during their meeting in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, D.C., Thursday. During the summit, Moon asked Trump to support limited and minor sanctions relief for North Korea, with Trump saying he remained open to an incremental deal with North Korea. It is the first time a South Korean presidential couple has been invited to the Oval Office.

US signals openness to smaller nuclear deal with N. Korea

By Kim Yoo-chul
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President Moon Jae-in's "urgent plea" to U.S. President Donald Trump to support limited and minor sanctions relief that affects the lives of North Korean citizens is bringing results as Trump signaled he remains open to an incremental deal with North Korea.

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"We are discussing certain humanitarian things right now and I am okay with that, to be honest, and you have to be okay with that. South Korea is doing certain things to help out with food and various things with North Korea," Trump told reporters at the start of a bilateral meeting with President Moon in the Oval Office, early on April 12 (KST).

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met recently with the head of the U.N. food agency and discussed possible ways for providing relevant assistance. Pyongyang is running short on food and oil reserves that wouldn't last for a year, reports said. North Korea's ambassador to the U.N. Kim Song sent letters to international organizations last month appealing for food donations.

Regarding the United States' stance toward a phased approach as preferred by the Koreans, with Washington offering some incentives based on the progress of North Korea's denuclearization, Trump said "There are various smaller deals that maybe could happen."

But he said Washington has no imminent plans for easing economic sanctions on the impoverished North Korea.

"We want sanctions to remain in place," Trump said, stressing it's "not the right time" for discussions of the possibility for an early resumption of frozen inter-Korean economic projects in the North such as the Gae-seong Industrial Complex and South Korean tourism to Mount Geumgang.

Now, the ball has been passed to the South Korean court as President Moon is asked to persuade North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to return to the nuclear dialogue with detailed and concrete nuclear disarmament plans, before Trump's "strategic patience" on sanctions is over.

Trump indicated Washington is unlikely to increase sanctions on the North. "I think that sanctions right now are at a level that's a fair level. We could always increase them, but I didn't want to do that ... as a lot of tremendous things will happen over time with North Korea."

In a press briefing hours before President Moon's departure to South Korea, Chung Eui-yong, head of the presidential National Security Council, told reporters the President told Trump about South Korea's plan to hold another inter-Korean summit "soon" as a way to revive the momentum for talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

Another senior presidential aide direct with the situation said Friday the leaders of the two countries agreed on a consensus to further embrace the risks of "personal diplomacy" or "top-down rapprochement" in advancing negotiations over nuclear disarmament. "South officials will soon begin contacting their North Korean counterparts as a necessary ground-work to make another inter-Korean summit happens," he said.

Trump emphasized his administration still prefers to strike a "big deal." The big deal is the North has to get rid of its nuclear arsenal, fully and verifiably, a condition which the North has been opposing.

Political analysts in Seoul said President Moon would send a special envoy to North Korea to deliver Trump's undisclosed messages to the North Korean leader hoping to get advanced and detailed measures from him toward dismantling his regime's nuclear program.

North Korea earlier presented its plans to entirely disband its major Yongbyon nuclear complex, but the U.S. demanded more and Trump ended his talks with Kim with no progress made at their second in-person meeting late February in Hanoi.

WTO backs Korea's ban on Fukushima seafood

Japan slams ruling as 'extremely regrettable'

By Nam Hyun-woo
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The government on Friday welcomed a WTO decision to uphold Korea's import ban on seafood from Japan's Fukushima prefecture and seven nearby regions following the 2011 nuclear disaster.

"The government highly appreciates the WTO ruling and welcomes the decision," Yoon Chang-yeol of the Office for Government Policy Coordination said in a press briefing. "The government will continue make the best efforts in inspecting imported foods so that only safe foods can be provided to the public."

He added that the government will maintain the import ban on all seafood products from the region.



Yoon Chang-yeol of the Office for Government Policy Coordination speaks during a press conference at the Government Complex in Sejong, on a WTO ruling supporting Korea's import ban on seafood from Japan's Fukushima prefecture and seven nearby regions, Friday.

The remark came after the WTO appellate body overturned almost every disputed point of a 2018 WTO dispute panel ruling, which sided with Japan in three out of four disputed points.

In the wake of the nuclear disaster, Korea has placed a blanket import ban on seafood from the eight prefectures in 2013, to which Japan reg-

istered a complaint with the WTO in 2015. In the complaint, Japan raised claims that Korea's ban on 28 fishery products is unfair.

In February last year, the dispute panel ruled in favor of Japan, saying Korea's ban was inconsistent with the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in three categories of discrimination, trade restriction and transparency.

In the appeals ruling, however, the appellate body said the panel's decision is "moot and of no legal effect," overturning all of those verdicts, except for Korea's unclear publication of information related to its ban.

Over the decision, Japan expressed its "extreme regret" on the WTO decision.

"Even though the ruling did not acknowledge that Korea's measures comply with the WTO rules, it is extremely regrettable that Japan's argument was not

approved," Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Kono said in a statement.

"There is no change in Japan's position of demanding Korea lift all the restriction measures, and we will pursue this via talks with Korea."

Despite Japan's strong stance, Yoon said the seafood row will not spread into a trade conflict between the two countries.

"As the WTO officially ruled Korea's import ban was a justifiable measure, there is no problem with the ban," Yoon said. "The foreign minister's remark is interpreted as Japan will make efforts inside of the country. There's no need to stretch the meaning of the remark."

According to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Korea imported 84,222 tons of Japanese seafood in 2010. The volume went down to 53,386 tons in 2013 when the blanket import ban went into effect, and declined further to 34,904 tons last year.

Two Koreas mark 25 years of taekwondo at Olympics

By Jung Min-ho
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Taekwondo athletes from South and North Korea staged a joint performance at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, Friday (KST), to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the martial art becoming an Olympic sport.

World Taekwondo (WT), under the leadership of South Korean Choe Chang-won, and the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF), led by North Korean Ri Yong-son, gave a joint demonstration in front of more than 100 people, including International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach.

According to WT, the event was held also in recognition of the sport's other contributions to the Olympic Movement, including innovative rule changes and the promotion of human rights and peace-building initiatives over the past 25 years.

Since the 103rd IOC Congress in Paris voted to include taekwondo in the 2000 Sydney Games, it has appeared at every Olympics.

Other distinguished guests included former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Association of Summer Olympic International Federations President Francesco Ricci Bitti, IOC Executive Board Member and United World Wrestling President Nenad Lalovic, International Handball Federation President Hassan

Moustafa and International University Sports Federation President Oleg Matysin.

Twenty-eight WT delegates and 23 ITF delegates took part in the performance, which featured acrobatic kicking skills, self-defense demonstrations and poomsae.

"Today's event was an important milestone in taekwondo's history. It is an honor to have been included on the Olympic Games program for the last 25 years. We take our commitment to the Olympic Movement very seriously and I would like to thank IOC President Thomas Bach and the IOC for their continued support," Choe said.

"During that time, we have seen taekwondo grow significantly thanks to the global exposure the Games

has provided ... We have innovated the sport, made it more exciting for athletes and fans and ensured that it can be practiced anywhere, anytime, by anyone regardless of age, gender or ability."

He reaffirmed his commitment to promoting Olympic values around the world. "We are committed to fulfilling our social responsibility and making a major contribution to social development and humanitarian causes. Working with the ITF, we are aiming for One World, One Taekwondo," he noted.

Ri said the joint performance would be marked in history.

"This day also marks the 64th anniversary of the birth of taekwondo," he said.

INSIDE

NATIONAL

The body of Hanjin Group Chairman Cho Yang-hi arrived from Los Angeles on a Korean Air flight early Friday morning and his funeral is being held for five days at Yonsei University's Severance Hospital in Seoul.

WORLD

A NASA study of a U.S. astronaut who spent a year in space while his twin brother remained on Earth is providing valuable insights into the effects of extended spaceflight on the human body, a key to planning a future manned mission to Mars, researchers said Thursday.

CULTURE

Unlike other bamboo flute musicians, who perform traditional Korean court or folk music for local audiences here in Korea, Yoo Hong's target audience is beyond the border.

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Best part of Riviera Nayarit includes dinner at Betty Vasquez

By Anna Z. Cook

SAN BLAS, Mexico — Does your favorite celebrity chef spring to mind when you're feasting pockdoh, clicking through the channels and looking for a cooking show? No?

The name "Betty Vasquez" didn't ring my bell, either. But when I searched the internet for "Mexico famous chefs," I found her in San Blas, in the state of Nayarit, north of Puerto Vallarta.

Later on, when Steve, my husband, suggested that we spend one of our Puerto Vallarta vacation days driving north along the Riviera Nayarit, I agreed, as long as it included dinner at Betty's, in San Blas.

Until then, I hadn't realized that the border between the two states, Jalisco and Nayarit, is just north of the airport, at the Rio (river) Ameco. Beyond the border you're in wonderland, on one of Mexico's last, unspoiled tropical coasts.

Still a bit off the grid, it's a glorious refuge for wildlife, with hundreds of empty sand beaches, clear-water streams and mangrove swamps thick with birds, fish, crocodiles, small mammals and even fox-like cats.

Driving there we'd pass a dozen little villages, from Nuevo Vallarta and



Bucerías's warm ocean, sandy beaches and laid-back lifestyle attract "snowbirds" from Canada.

Huamantla, Bucerías, Huanacastle, Punta Mita, Sayulita, San Francisco, Lo de Marcos, Guayabitos and Chacala, before ever reaching San Blas.

But it wasn't that far, according to Sonia, the concierge at our hotel, the Miraval, in Nuevo Vallarta. "San Blas is a three-hour drive, lots of curves, but scenic," she said.

"Take your toothbrush and stay overnight. Then you'll have time to stop along the way in Bucerías, Sayulita and San Pancho. Everybody swims in the ocean and you can get lunch."

We left Puerto Vallarta early the

next morning heading north on Highway 200, following the coastline, passing miles of sandy shores and rolling waves, thrilled to be seeing something new.

Steve, who'd done some research, wondered whether San Blas, now a sleepy farm town, was the same port of call where, from the 16th century on, Spain's treasure ships, returning from the Philippines, first made landfall, stopping to take on fresh water.

Later, in 1787, when Spain decided to push her empire north, as far as Alaska, San Blas became an official naval port. It was here that Father



Mexico's many arts and crafts include woven fabrics, for sale here in Bucerías, on Banderas Bay.

Junipero Serra, the Spanish priest, and a company of soldiers embarked, sailing north to build California's missions.

Our first stop in Bucerías, was just long enough to explore the expansive arts and crafts street market, on Lazaro Cardenas Avenue, and for a 10-minute swim in the ocean, a block away. As we were leaving, two friendly Canadians in bathing suits, there for the winter season, stopped to urge us to join them. "It's marvelous," they said.

The next stop was the Four Seasons and the W Hotel, for a look at each

resort's very special lobby art, including paintings, pottery and Huichol beaded figures and murals.

A few miles on we reached Sayulita, an art colony and one of Mexico's historic "magic towns." With galleries, shops, cafes, coffee shops, cottages and sheds crowded onto every buildable inch, its cobblestone lanes were as boisterous as they were colorful. Joining mobs of shoppers, mostly Mexican vacationers, we found a beachside cafe and ordered ice tea.

Eventually we reached San Pancho — San Francisco, officially — a place I'll remember because *we sat on the*

central plaza and watched the iguanas in a tree, then spotted a street artist who sold me a primitive painting. "My father paints all of these," he said, showing me a half-dozen different scenes. "He makes the paper, too."

Colored flags strung between the rooftops — a recent trend, it seems — led the way to the ocean and Las Palmas Restaurant on the beach, where we sat under an umbrella, watched the surfers and ordered lunch. Lingered over a platter with six kinds of tacos and a couple of pints, an hour ticked away before we noticed it. By the time we reached San Blas the sun was leaning westward, bathing the ocean in a silvery sheen.

As we circled the plaza, passing mothers pushing babies in strollers, old men playing checkers and skinny kids chasing around the fountain, I caught a whiff of barbecued pork. A wave of nostalgia made my heart thump, and I felt like a fifth-grader again, traveling with my parents.

San Blas, I could see, wouldn't be on the average traveler's bucket list. But simplicity is its charm. If you've seen Alfonso Cuarón's film "Roma," a story of ordinary people coping with life in Mexico in the 1970s, you'll know what I mean.

(Future News Service)