

Trump Vs Kim Showdown

What is the issue?

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- US president Trump recently called off the planned bilateral summit with North Korean Premier Kim.

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- A series of mis-steps has led to this unravelling, and the risk of geo-political tensions escalating further is very much alive.

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How did the current situation evolve?

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- US president Trump and North Korean leader Kim were scheduled to meet soon in Singapore for a comprehensive bilateral to end hostilities.

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- The meet was highly anticipated as it held the key to resolving the nuclear crisis that had engulfed the Korean peninsula for almost a decade now.

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- Usually, acceptance of invitations is made public only after comprehensive planning on the agenda to be discussed and expected goals are clear.

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- But, when Trump had immediately agreed for a summit on Kim's invitation, it was widely perceived as an instinctive decision without proper planning.

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- Ironically, this was despite the intense acrimony between US and North Korea over the course of the previous year.

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- Currently, Trump has unilaterally pulled out of the meet saying that North Korea is displaying a high headed behaviour and wasn't committed enough.

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How has North Korea conducted itself since the thaw began?

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- Once Mr. Trump had cleared the summit proposal, North Korea also moved fast, making a series of gestures to build goodwill.

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- In April, there was a summit between Mr. Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in at a border village in the demilitarised zone.

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- North Korea pledged to halt nuclear and missile tests, and also dismantled its nuclear test site – which was largely a symbolic gesture.

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- Kim also ordered the release of 3 Korean-Americans, who were undergoing prison terms.

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How has US conducted itself on this issue?

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- But the US hasn't taken these into account and has shown little bonhomie from its side to ease tensions.

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- It went ahead with its joint military exercise with South Korea, which could've been postponed or cancelled to convey goodwill.

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- Trump's team has also been bad mouthing Kim, and openly airing possibilities of a violently deposing Kim if he doesn't denuclearise on US terms.

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- All of these has triggered legitimate anger from the North Korean officials, and ended up issuing a fresh warning to the US of a nuclear showdown.

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How does the future look?

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- Despite the setback, hopes for an eventual one-to-one meeting still exist.

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- In a letter to Mr. Kim, Mr. Trump said the North was welcome to return to talks if it changed its attitude towards the U.S.

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- Pyongyang also issued a conciliatory response, saying that it hoped the U.S. President would reconsider his decision to “unilaterally” cancel the summit.
- Both Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim should keep in mind the larger goal of de-escalation of tension, if not outright denuclearisation of North Korea.
- The only sound way to address the Korean nuclear crisis is diplomacy.

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Source: The Hindu

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