



By: TA | AP Brief

# Kim Jong Un will attend a military parade in Beijing next week



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will make his first visit to China in six years to attend a military parade next week, the two countries said Thursday, in an event that would bring him **together** with a group of world leaders for the first time since taking office in late 2011.

Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin will be among 26 foreign leaders who attend next Wednesday's parade in Beijing to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and China's resistance against Japan's wartime aggressions, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

"We warmly welcome General Secretary Kim Jong Un to China to attend the commemorative events," Hong Lei, China's assistant minister of foreign affairs, told a press conference. "Upholding, consolidating and developing the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK is a firm position of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government."

North Korea's state news agency, KCNA, said Kim will visit China at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the war's end. It gave no further details, including how long he will stay in China and whether he will hold an official meeting with Xi, Putin or other leaders visiting China.

Others coming for the parade include the leaders of Iran, Belarus, Serbia, Cuba, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Malaysia.

No leaders from the United States or other major Western European countries are expected to attend, in part because of their differences with Putin over the war in Ukraine.

The parade is expected to feature some of China's newest weaponry and a speech by Xi.

## Kim's first trip to China since 2019

If Kim's trip is realized, it would be his first trip

to China since 2019. Since inheriting power upon his father's death in December 2011, Kim has met Xi, Putin, U.S. President Donald Trump, former South Korean President Moon Jae-in and others, but all those summits were bilateral meetings and Kim hasn't attended any multilateral events involving foreign leaders.

In all, Kim traveled to China four times from 2018 to 2019 to meet Xi.

China has long been North Korea's biggest trading partner and main aid provider, but there have been questions about their relations in recent years.

**North Korea is expected to take steps to improve ties with China to revive its troubled economy**

North Korea has been **focusing** on expanding cooperation with Russia by **supplying** troops and ammunition to support its war against Ukraine in exchange for economic and military assistance.

But many observers say North Korea is expected to take steps to improve ties with China to revive its troubled economy, because there is a limit to what it can get from Russia and it's also unclear if North Korea and Russia would maintain the same level of cooperation after the Ukraine war ends.

In 2023, about 97% of North Korea's external trade was with China, while 1.2% was with Russia, according to Chinese data.

## Kim seeks to repair relations with Xi

Kim's visit to China could also be related to efforts to restart diplomacy with Trump, who has repeatedly highlighted his relationship with Kim and expressed his hopes to resume talks.

North Korea has so far dismissed Trump's outreach, but many analysts say North Korea

would return to talks if it believes the U.S. would make greater concessions.

“Pyongyang’s illicit cooperation with Moscow has strained ties with Beijing, even as China’s political and economic support remains vital for the North Korean regime,” said Leif-Eric Easley, professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

### To re-engage Trump from a position of strength, Kim seeks to repair relations with Xi - Leif-Eric Easley

“To re-engage Trump from a position of strength, Kim seeks to repair relations with Xi, and attending the parade in Beijing is a highly visible way of doing that,” Easley said.

During a meeting with Lee in Washington this week, Trump spoke of his past summits with Kim, including one at the Korean Demilitarized Zone. Responding to a question over whether he would return to the Demilitarized Zone, Trump told reporters, “I loved it. Remember when I walked across the line and everyone went crazy.”

During Trump's first term, he met Kim three times from 2018-19, but their high-stakes summit eventually collapsed due to wrangling over U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea. Kim has since conducted weapons **tests** to modernize and expand his nuclear arsenal.