
AS IT IS

North Koreans Arrive in South Korea for Olympics

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Ten North Korean **skaters** and **skiers** arrived in South Korea on Thursday to take part in the Winter Olympics, which opens next week.

Final preparations for the Olympics have brought a temporary reduction in tensions over the North Korean government's nuclear weapons program.

A total of 22 North Korean **athletes** have won special permission from the International Olympic Committee to compete in the winter games. The event will take place from February 9 through the 25 in PyeongChang, South Korea.

A group of North Korean female **hockey** players arrived in South Korea last week. They are joining with South Korean players to form the first **unified** Korean team in the Olympics.

Until recently, North Korea had no athletes approved to compete in the games.

The 10 athletes were part of a 32-member North Korean **delegation** that arrived in South Korea by air. They flew on a South Korean flight that also brought back South Korean non-Olympic skiers who had visited a North Korean ski area this week.

The North Koreans did not speak much at the South Korean airport and later at the athletes' village in the eastern city of Gangneung. But some smiled and waved their hands to reporters at the athletes' village. One said, "Nice to meet you!"

The two Koreas have been planning a number of joint activities aimed at showing an easing of tensions during the games. Their athletes are to parade together with a single "unification flag" during the opening ceremony.

A rare sight on Thursday was the appearance of North Korean flags at the athletes' village and other Olympic areas. Normally, South Korea would bar the flying of the North Korean flag on its territory while an anti-North Korea security law remains in effect.

South Korea sees the Olympics as a way to open meaningful communication with North Korea after a period of heightened tensions and diplomatic clashes with the North.

Some observers say the North Korean government may try to use improved ties with South Korea as a way to weaken sanctions against the North. The United States has led international efforts aimed at punishing North Korea for its nuclear and missile activities.

"It feels **amazing** (that the North Koreans are coming)," said Choi So Eun, a college student who volunteered to work during the Olympics. Choi spoke to the Associated Press after taking a **selfie** with another South Korean volunteer under a North Korean flag at the Gangneung athletes' village.

"I thought only high-level officials in South Korea could see a North Korean in person, but I think I can see them here so I'm excited," Choi said.

Next week, North Korea is to send a 230-member cheering **squad**, a 140-strong art group, **taekwondo** demonstrators and reporters as part of its Olympic delegation.

The last time North Korea sent a big delegation to South Korea was for the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon.

I'm Pete Musto.

The Associated Press (AP) reported this story. George Grow adapted the report for VOA Learning English. Hai Do was the editor. We want to hear from you. How do you think the Olympics will affect relations between North and South Korea? Write to us in the Comments Section.

Words in This Story

skater(s) – *n.* a person who is trained in a sport involving wearing a pair of shoes with blades on the bottom that allow them to glide on ice

skier(s) – *n.* a person who is trained in a sport involving wearing a pair of long narrow pieces of wood, metal, or plastic that curve upward slightly in front, are attached to shoes, and are used for gliding over snow

athlete(s) – *n.* someone trained in or good at sports

hockey – *n.* a game played on an ice rink in which two teams of six players on skates use curved sticks to try to shoot a puck into the opponent's goal

unified – *adj.* joined or brought together

delegation – *n.* a group of people who are chosen to vote or act for someone else

amazing – *adj.* surprising

selfie – *n.* a picture that you take of yourself especially by using the camera on your smartphone

squad – *n.* a group of people who are involved in a particular activity

taekwondo – *n.* a style of fighting that originated in Korea and that uses kicks and punches but no weapons