

Likely issues on the agenda

When US President Donald Trump meets Mr Kim Jong Un, Chairman of North Korea's State Affairs Commission, on Tuesday, both sides are likely to talk only about broad outlines of a nuclear agreement. In what would be the first breakthrough in the fraught process, North Korea and the US may sign a peace deal that could pave the way for a cautious thaw in ties.

DENUCLEARISATION

Getting Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear missile programmes has been the aim of all international negotiations with North Korea since the early 1990s. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who spoke just after becoming the first serving US official ever to meet Mr Kim, suggested US interests would be put first, saying the aim would be "an agreement... such that the North Korean leadership will step away from its efforts to hold America at risk with nuclear weapons".

This added to Japanese and South Korean fears that Mr Trump could seek a quick ICBM deal, while putting shorter-range missiles threatening the allies to one side. Experts say North Korea needs several more tests to prove its ICBM capability, making Mr Kim's test freeze highly significant.



VERIFICATION AND COMPENSATION

North Korea is seeking relief from international sanctions hurting its economy. In past failed deals, it agreed to give up its weapons programme in exchange for aid, including fuel oil and alternative nuclear reactors, as well as security guarantees, which have included a US pledge not to attack or invade.

North Korea also agreed in past deals to return to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to invite International Atomic Energy Agency verification. Activity at its main Yongbyon nuclear reactor site will be a factor in future talks.

Mr Pompeo has said North Korea should not expect rewards until it takes irreversible steps. The Trump administration said Pyongyang would have to substantially dismantle its nuclear programmes before US concessions.

A command post and barracks of Punggye-ri nuclear test ground are blown up during the dismantlement process in North Korea on May 24.



PEACE TREATY

North Korea has long sought to replace the 1953 Korean War armistice with a peace treaty. The two Koreas have resumed this discussion, but South Korea has danced around the term "peace treaty" by referencing a "peace regime" or an "agreement to end hostile acts". Mr Trump has said the effort has his "blessing" – if Pyongyang agrees to abandon its nuclear arsenal.



ABDUCTION OF JAPANESE

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met Mr Trump at the White House on Thursday, and raised the issue of the fate of 12 Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Japan wants progress on the abduction issue to be given the same weight as demands over North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes in Mr Trump's negotiations with Mr Kim.

