



South Korean President urges talks with Japan

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On the anniversary of Japan's World War Two surrender, South

Korea's president on Thursday (August 15) urged Japan to contemplate its wartime past and offered to engage in talks to repair strained ties, while Japan pledged to never repeat the horrors of war.

On the anniversary of Japan's World War Two surrender, South Korea's President has offered an olive branch.

The two sides are locked in a different kind of battle at the moment: a diplomatic trade dispute that's escalated for months.

But in a televised address, president Moon Jae-in said that Seoul would join hands with Tokyo if Japan decides to choose dialogue.

It marks a softer approach from South Korea's leader as the two countries face their lowest ebb in decades.

That, however, wasn't the sentiment on South Korea's streets.

Thousands of protesters marched in an anti-Japan rally Thursday, a day that also marked Korea's independence from Japanese colonial rule.

Among them - former forced laborers who are at the heart of the two countries' bitter trade fight today.

Japan's colonization of Korea had included forced labour by Japanese companies like Mitsubishi, and last year South Korea's Supreme Court ordered those companies to compensate the victims.

Tokyo refused and said the matter had already been settled.

Ties started to deteriorate and the chill deepened when Japan ended South Korea's fast-track trade status this month, prompting Seoul to retaliate with the same.

At a ceremony in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged never to repeat the devastation of war.

But he also sent an offering to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine.

Past visits by Japanese leaders have stirred outrage in South Korea, because the shrine honors Japanese wartime leaders - convicted as war criminals.