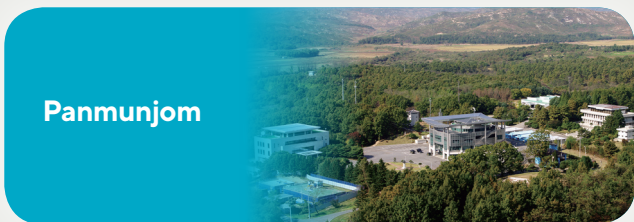


Introducing **Panmunjom**



Panmunjom



Institute for Unification Education
Ministry of Unification, Korea



Introducing Panmunjom

- 04 Overview
- 06 History
- 09 A Gateway for People to Traverse Fences
- 10 From a Military Site to a Place of Dialogue and Contact Between North and South
- 11 A Landmark for Peace on the Korean Peninsula
- 13 Panmunjom Tour Summary
- 14 The Freedom House
- 16 Military Armistice Commission Conference Room (T2)
- 18 Tree of Peace and Prosperity
- 19 Foot Bridge
- 21 Panmunjom, the Bridge Towards Peace

Overview

- Panmunjom is another name for the Joint Security Area (JSA) along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) inside the Demilitarized Zone located in Jinseo-myeon, Paju, Gyeonggi Province.
- At its 25th general meeting in October 1953, the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) agreed to create an area monitored jointly by the United Nations forces and the Communist armies around the MDL in the MAC Headquarters Area to ensure the unimpeded operation of the Commission. Established through this agreement, the square-shaped JSA is roughly 800 meters wide (east to west) and 400 meters long (north to south).
- In the early days, the JSA was literally a joint security area, where the U.N. and Communist forces took joint charge of its security and supervision. The Panmunjom Tree-cutting Incident in 1976, however, led to the separation of security personnel within the JSA, with the south side of the



A panoramic view of Panmunjom (2009)

MDL guarded by the U.N. forces and the north side by the Communist forces.

- At the September 2018 inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang, the two Koreas agreed on the demilitarization and free travel within the JSA. Accordingly, guard posts and firearms inside the JSA were removed under mutual verification, while discussions for free travel are currently underway.



Panmunjom Featured in Billy Joel's Song

An American singer-songwriter known for many hits including "Piano Man," "My Life," "Honesty," and "Just the Way You Are," Billy Joel is also widely popular among Koreans. One of his greatest songs, "We Didn't Start the Fire," which was released in 1989 and occupied Billboard No. 1 for two weeks, can be considered the American version of "100 Great Koreans."

This song chronicles major events and persons that impacted the world over 40 years from 1949 to 1989. Its fast-paced lyrics include four words or phrases related to Korea, one of them being Panmunjom. About 40 seconds into the song, you can hear "television, **North Korea, South Korea**, Marilyn Monroe, Rosenbergs, H-bomb, Sugar Ray, **Panmunjom**" in turn (they are later followed by **Syngman Rhee**). These names refer to key events and figures in 1950 and 1951. In 1950, TVs were becoming widespread; the Korean War broke out (on June 25th); and Marilyn Monroe reached the peak of her popularity. In 1951, the hydrogen bomb was invented; Sugar Ray Robinson became the world welterweight boxing champion; and talks over the armistice agreement started in Panmunjom.

History

- Today's Panmunjom is not the venue where the ceasefire talks and the signing of the Armistice Agreement originally took place. It was Naebongjang, a high-end restaurant in northern Kaesong, where the series of ceasefire talks actually began in June 1951. However, as North Korean troops in the area staged an intentional show of force during the talks, the United Nations requested a change of venue, citing the principle of neutrality. North Korea proposed the tavern village of Neolmun-ri as a new location, which was accepted by the U.N. forces. Neolmun-ri was a tiny village of only four thatched-roof houses along a street, one of which was a tavern-cum-store.
- Neolmun-ri is a native Korean name meaning “wooden door village.” With the designation of the village as the new location for the armistice talks, there arose a need for it to be named in English and Chinese for the participating nations, namely the United States and China. The Korean word “Neolmun” was changed to the Chinese translation “Panmun (板門),” and “jom (店)” was added from the tavern-store across the meeting



A panoramic view of Panmunjom (1975)

venue. Hence the new name “Panmunjom” (in Korean-Chinese characters, “pan” means wooden board, “mun” gate or door, and “jom” store).

- Following the end of the ceasefire talks, the North Korean government built a new wooden building with a total floor space of about 650 square meters—this is the original “old” Panmunjom building, where the Armistice Agreement was signed. The old Panmunjom is located approximately a kilometer away in the 10 o’clock direction from the present-day Panmunjom.

Panmunjom, a Symbol of Talks

Today in Panmunjom, matters related to the Armistice Agreement between the UN and DPRK are discussed. From a historical point of view, Panmunjom and its surrounding area were where negotiations over jurisdiction took place for hundreds of years in the Joseon era.

The name of the township around Panmunjom is Songnam-myeon (松南面), a name that likely originated from Songrim (松林), a large pine grove nearby.

Songnam-myeon belonged to the administrative district of Kaesong-bu during the Goryeo Dynasty, but it was redistricted to Jangdan-bu in the early Joseon period. In Kaesong-bu, which had a relatively small area and a large population, a succession of Kaesong *yusu* or magistrates (equivalent to present-day mayors) endeavored for hundreds of years to incorporate Songnam-myeon back into Kaesong-bu, but such efforts resulted in a failure without any clear reason until the end of the Joseon Dynasty.

After the Korean War, the areas to the north and south of Panmunjom were allocated to the administrative districts of “Panmun-gun, Kaesong (special-level city)” in North Korea and “Gunnæ-myeon, Paju, Gyeonggi Province” in South Korea, respectively. In other words, ironically enough, the efforts of the aforementioned Joseon-era officials came to half-fruit through the Korean War and the Armistice Agreement.

The Old Panmunjom Building Today

The North Korean government turned the original Panmunjom building into the Peace Museum, where a huge copy of Pablo Picasso's *The Dove* is displayed on the roof. Why a painting by Picasso? It is probably because Picasso was a devoted communist who joined the French Communist Party in 1944.

Etymology of Panmunjom (Neolmun-ri)

There are three theories as to the origin of the name "Neolmun-ri." The first suggests that it was because there were numerous wooden panel gates in the village. The second is linked to the presence of the Neolmun-dari (bridge of wooden panels) or Panmun Bridge nearby. Lastly, it is proposed that the written name of the village became distorted from Neolb-eun-ri (넓은리, meaning "large village" because of its wide land area) to Neolbeun-ri (널븐리, the Korean phonetic transcription of the former), eventually changing to Neolmun-ri (널문리).

Historical Misconceptions About the Name of Panmunjom (Neolmun-ri)

One of the hypotheses for the name of the village is related to the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592. It suggests that the village was always called Neolmun-ri in pure Korean, and its origin is traced back to a historical episode: when King Seonjo arrived at the village and failed to find a boat to cross the river on his way fleeing to Uiju during the Japanese invasion, the villagers took down their gates made of wooden panels and built an ad hoc bridge. However, disproving this theory, the word "panmun (板門)" is also found in the historical records prior to 1592.

A Gateway for People to Traverse Fences

- Panmunjom was the only official access point between the two Koreas after the ceasefire until the opening of the reconnected roads of the Gyeongui (Seoul-Sinuiju) Line and the Donghae (East Sea) Line in the 2000s.
- A general exchange of prisoners took place at Panmunjom immediately after the ceasefire. From August 5 to September 6 in 1953, about 82,000 North Korean and Chinese prisoners as well as 13,000 UN prisoners were repatriated through Panmunjom.
- In addition, exchange visits by separated family members and folk art troupes (151 participants each from the North and South) occurred in September 1985, marking the first civilian visits through Panmunjom.
- After the cattle drive through Panmunjom by Chung Ju-yung, founder and honorary chairman of Hyundai Group, in 1998, the channel for inter-Korean visits was replaced by the Donghae Line or the Gyeongui Line in the 2000s.



Home visits of separated families and mutual visits of art troupes (1985)



Delivery of cattle to the North (1998)

From a Military Site to a Place of Dialogue and Contact Between North and South

- Panmunjom has continued to serve as the window for inter-Korean dialogue and contacts since the 1970s.
- As of September 2019, there have been a total of 376 inter-Korean government talks in Panmunjom, including the preliminary meeting for the North-South Red Cross talks in 1971, the main Red Cross talks and military talks. Preliminary meetings and working-level talks have been held in the conference room of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission within Panmunjom, while more high-profile talks have been held either in the Panmun Pavilion on the North Korean side or in the Freedom House on the South Korean side. The inter-Korean Peace House summit on April 27, 2018, and the May 26 inter-Korean summit at the Unification Pavilion also took place here in Panmunjom.



First preliminary meeting for the North-South Red Cross talks (Sep. 20, 1971)



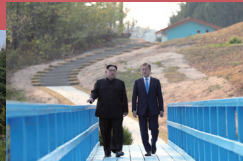
Inter-Korean summit (Apr. 27, 2018)



8th inter-Korean general-level military talks (Jun. 14, 2018)

A Landmark for Peace on the Korean Peninsula

- In 2018, with the warm breeze of peace blowing upon the Korean Peninsula, Panmunjom once again came into focus as a historic location to lay the foundation for peace. The April 2018 inter-Korean summit meeting was held at the Peace House in Panmunjom, where the historical Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula (4.27 Panmunjom Declaration) was announced by the two Korean leaders. By including Panmunjom in its title, this declaration added a new layer to the history of the location—that is, as the starting point towards peace.
- As a follow-up to the Panmunjom Declaration, the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office was opened in Kaesong in September 2018. Subsequently, the Pyongyang Joint Declaration and the Military Agreement followed as the outcome of the summit meeting in Pyongyang on September 19, 2018. It is noteworthy that the DMZ is now undergoing actual demilitarization based on the September 19 Military Agreement.
- In June 2019, Panmunjom was once again in the spotlight of international media. The 2019 Korea-United States DMZ Summit, in which an incumbent U.S. president set foot on North Korean soil for the first time in history, led Panmunjom to be recognized as a symbolic place that promotes peace on the Korean Peninsula. Main sites in the armistice village of Panmunjom—the Peace House, a venue for inter-Korean summits; the Freedom House, where North Korea-United States summit was hosted in 2019; and the Foot Bridge that North and South Korean leaders have walked across together—have become tourist attractions for both local and overseas visitors.





The Freedom House

In the past, inter-Korean liaison was conducted by the Freedom House on the South Korean side and by the Panmun Pavilion on the North Korean side. Today, that role is played by the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office located in Kaesong. The Freedom House and the Panmun Pavilion communicate with each other by phone and fax, and each has a separate conference building behind it. The Peace House and Unification Pavilion are meeting venues administered by the South and North, respectively.

Trace of Competition Between the Two Koreas

The construction of the Freedom House and the Panmun Pavilion shows signs of competition between the two Koreas. In 1965, South Korea completed the construction of the Freedom House, which was comprised of twin two-story buildings and an octagonal pavilion

placed in between, with a total area of about 280 square meters. In 1969, North Korea built the Panmun Pavilion with a total area of nearly 400 square meters. In 1994, North Korea built a new Panmun Pavilion in the same site. The building was much larger than the previous one, with the first and second floors amounting to 860 square meters each and the third floor to 430 square meters. In 1998, South Korea constructed a new Freedom House in the site where the old Freedom House had been located. The newly-built Freedom House had five floors including one basement, with a total area of 4,960 square meters. Two smaller buildings were replaced by one larger building, while the octagonal pavilion was relocated to the east end of the first floor of the new building.

In the Korean Film Council's Namyangju Studios, there is a Panmunjom film set where a famous South Korean film, *Joint Security Area*, was shot. The octagonal pavilion in the set is located in between two small buildings as it was in the old Freedom House. This is because the Panmunjom set was built in 1997, a year prior to the construction of the new Freedom House (1998).

Military Armistice Commission Conference Room (T2)

- After the armistice was signed, the location of the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) Conference Room became a matter of controversy. North Korea insisted on using the old Panmunjom building as a conference hall, while the UN claimed that the new buildings should be built on the MDL. Ultimately, the new buildings were constructed in their current location.
- The MAC Conference Room is collectively comprised of seven temporary buildings situated on the MDL. Out of the seven buildings, four grey ones are administered by North Korea and three blue ones by the United Nations. The three blue one-story buildings are called T1, T2 and T3, respectively, in order from west to east. T stands for “temporary,” figuratively indicating that the world’s longest ceasefire is still in effect.
- T1 is the conference room for the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (closed meetings), T2 is the main conference room for the MAC (open meetings), and T3 is a smaller meeting room for the MAC (closed meetings).
- Only T2 is open to tourists. The main conference room is shared by North and South Korea, and accordingly tourists from both sides are allowed to enter. Interestingly, to avoid embarrassing encounters in the room, the FCFS (first come, first served) rule was adopted. In other words, a tourist or a tour group who enters first can look around it first. When tourists from the South enter the room, T2 is guarded by South Korean soldiers: one South Korean soldier locks the northern gate and stands before the gate while the other soldier stands at one end of the conference table in the middle of the room, where the soldier stands right on top of the MDL. When tourists on the North Korean side enter the conference room, the room is guarded by North Korean soldiers. They also lock the southern gate and stand guard before it.

- There is a conference table at the center of the meeting room, which is bisected by the MDL. In early days, the Joint Security Area was not divided by the MDL and personnel from both sides could travel through the area without restrictions. However, an axe attack by North Korean soldiers against American soldiers on August 18, 1976 (also known as Panmunjom Tree-cutting Incident) resulted in the establishment of the MDL within the JSA. Since then, both sides have been prohibited from crossing the line in the area, T2 being the only exception.
- A narrow road between T2 and T3 (4 meters wide) is where the meeting of the Korean leaders as well as the trilateral meeting of the leaders of the two Koreas and the United States took place. It is equidistant from the Freedom House and the Panmun Pavilion. This road is often used when officials who have visited North Korea return to South Korea or when North Koreans are repatriated.



Tree of Peace and Prosperity

- This spot is where the North Korean leader and South Korean President took part in a tree planting ceremony during the Panmunjom inter-Korean summit on April 27, 2018. The short and wide pine tree called “*bansong*” is from 1953, the year the Korean War armistice was signed. The tree was planted on the so-called “cattle road,” on which the late Hyundai Group honorary chairman Chung Ju-yung passed through Panmunjom, leading a convoy of trucks filled with cattle in 1998.
- To express a strong will for peace and unity on the Korean Peninsula, the tree was planted in a mixture of soil from Mount Halla in South Korea and Mount Paektu in North Korea and watered with water from Han River in South and Taedong River in North. The handle of the shovel used for planting was made of wood from a coniferous tree, which is easily obtained in North Korea, while the shovel blade was made of South Korean steel.
- The phrase “Planted here is peace and prosperity,” printed on the stone marker to commemorate the event, was suggested by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. This tree planting ceremony was proposed by the South, and the North accepted it, including all relevant details. After the event, South Korean President Moon remarked, “It was not a pine tree that we planted, but rather peace and prosperity,” while North Korean state chairman Kim Jong-un mentioned, “We must cherish this hard-earned spring between North and South, as well as the future.”



Foot Bridge

- Originally, there were two camps for the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC). One is a camp staffed by Swedish and Swiss officers. The camp is situated to the south of the MDL and nearby Panmunjom JSA (to the east of T1, T2, and T3), and there is a wetland between the NNSC camp and the three temporary buildings. The other was a camp located to the north of the MDL for Polish and Czechoslovakian personnel, who were eventually driven out by North Korea after the collapse of the Communist Bloc along with the democratization of their respective countries in the 1990s.
- The Foot Bridge is a shortcut to T1, T2 and T3 from the NNSC camp, and was constructed on wetland to secure a shorter route. The name “Foot Bridge” refers to a pedestrian bridge, which has come to be called “Dobodari,” a literal translation of “foot bridge” in Korean. Recently, this facility on the United Nations’ side is also dubbed “Blue Bridge” as it has been painted in blue, the official color of the United Nations.
- The Foot Bridge has become known for the friendship walk during the inter-Korean summit on April 27, 2018. It was originally 50 meters long and 1.5 meters wide, fairly narrow for two average-sized adults to walk side by side, which may have left the two





leaders uncomfortable. In preparation for the 2018 inter-Korean summit, the bridge was renovated: the shape of the guardrail was changed to a straight line and its width was extended by 0.5 meters. The overall design of the Foot Bridge was also transformed from simple straight line to a “T” shape by adding a protrusion in its middle to create a space for talks between the two leaders.

- Another reason for making the bridge in a “T” shape was to ensure that the bridge reached an MDL marker. By the “tea table” for summits, there is a severely rusted MDL marker that would have read “Military Demarcation Line 0101.” However, it is now illegible due to extreme corrosion. MDL markers are installed at 200-meter intervals from the mouth of Imjin River to the eastern coast of Korea, and numbered from 0001 to 1292. The number “0101” on the MDL marker by the Foot Bridge indicates that it is the 101st marker.
- Before the 2018 inter-Korean summit, the United Nations Command planned to replace the MDL markers with new ones, but South Korea proposed to leave them as they were, in order to reflect the pain and tragedy of national division.

Panmunjom, the Bridge towards Peace

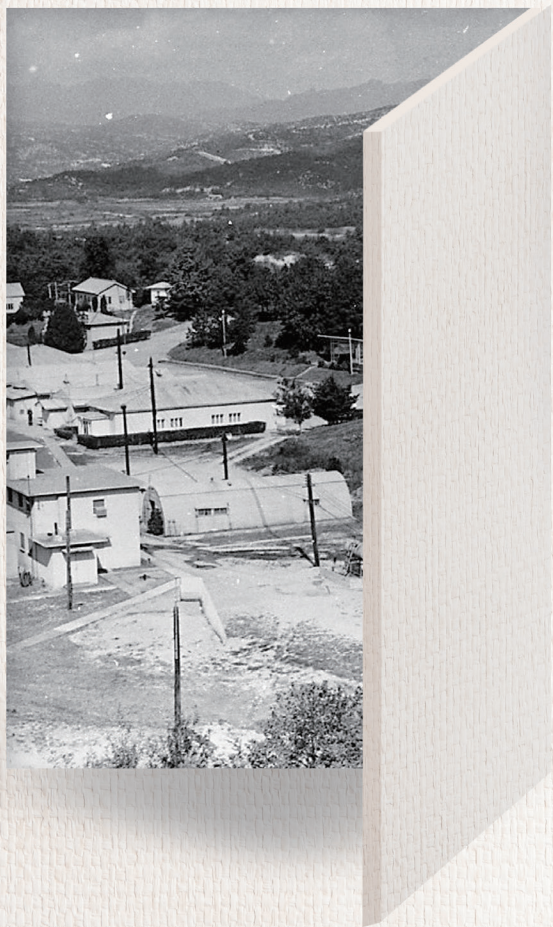
- In addition to its spatial value as a symbol of transformation from division to peace, Panmunjom has incalculable value as a tourism resource.
- The Panmunjom area is where the east-to-west DMZ peace tour belt ranging from Baengnyeong Island (PY-do) to Goseong meets the north-to-south UNESCO World Heritage belt with Pyongyang’s Goguryeo relics, Kaesong’s Goryeo relics, and Seoul’s Joseon relics. Furthermore, Panmunjom is easily accessible from the Incheon International Airport and also serves as a transportation hub as it can be linked to the continent through the Gyeongui Line railway and road.
- Among the old Joseon-era roads (six main roads), Road No. 1 Uiju-daero (Uiju main road) was one of the country’s most vital passages that connected Seoul and Uiju through Panmunjom. Starting from Gyeongbok Palace, the road ran through Donuimun, Gupabal, Byeokjegwan, and Imjinnaru and crossed Imjin River. After passing through Panmunjom, it continued toward Kaesong, Pyongyang, Anju, Kwaksan, and Uiju. It was also an official route for envoys to China.
- Today, Panmunjom is the northernmost point that South Koreans can reach. However, if the Uiju-daero is reconnected, Panmunjom will stand at the center of the road.
- Panmunjom should play a pivotal role, not only as an inter-Korean passageway on the border line but also as a “bridge of peace” connecting the North and South as well as Asia and Europe, while ushering a new era in which the accelerating peace process on the Korean Peninsula can produce tangible results.

Introducing **Panmunjom**

Publisher : Research and Development Division, Institute for Unification Education
123 (Suyu-dong), 4-19-ro, Gangbuk-gu, Seoul
TEL. 82-2-901-7162 FAX. 82-2-901-7029

Publication date : April 2020

Institute for Unification Education website : www.uniedu.go.kr



Institute for Unification Education
Ministry of Unification, Korea