

South Korea to hold trade talks with Japan in December

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South Korean President Moon Jae-in. (AP)

Seoul: South Korea and Japan have agreed to hold senior-level trade talks in December to discuss Tokyo's export restrictions at the centre of a bitter dispute between the two countries, the South Korean trade ministry said on Friday.

The talks would include Japan's tighter rules since July on the export of three high-tech materials to South Korea and its removal of Seoul from its so-called "white list" of countries with fast-track trade status, the ministry said.

Seoul responded by taking Japan off its list of fast-track trade countries, deepening the trade dispute that has festered for months and hurt some of Asia's biggest exporters.

"We will pursue dialogue with an ultimate goal to make things like the white list or three items go back to the original state," Lee Ho-hyun, a South Korean senior trade ministry official, said at a news briefing.

The talks would take place in the third week of December in Tokyo, the ministry added.

The two countries agreed on Saturday to hold a summit next month in a major step towards improving relations strained by decades of bitterness over their wartime past. In a further sign of an easing of tensions, South Korea has also agreed to stick to an intelligence-sharing deal with Japan.

Officials from both countries met on Thursday to discuss holding the senior-level trade dialogue, according to the South Korean trade ministry.

The mood at the meeting on Thursday was more "friendly" than a similar meeting in July shortly after Tokyo imposed the export curbs, Lee added.

- Reuters