

DECEMBER 1, 2010, 10:11 AM ET

Peace Potential in Korea Bid

Next up, Korea.



Associated Press

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, right, shakes hands with FIFA head Sepp Blatter during a press conference in Seoul last month.

It hasn't been a great month for peace on the Korean peninsula, as North Korea fired artillery at South Korea for the first time since the Korean War armistice. But FIFA President Joseph "Sepp" Blatter likes to note the uniting power of a soccer ball, and according to the leaders of the South Korean bid, what diplomats haven't been able to accomplish during the past 60 years, soccer can.

With a message built more on hope than realism, South Korea's presentation was dominated by the idea that only sport, and specifically soccer, could bring peace to the divided country. Standing next to a ball used in the 1991 U20 World Cup, when North and South Koreans played on a unified team, former Prime Minister Lee Hong-Koo said preparing for the World Cup and creating peace will go hand in hand.

"If we get World Cup for 2022, we will see a concerted effort by Asians to work together in the next 12 years to make our dreams come true," Lee said. "I will ask you to please join us in this historic venture."

"Let's work together, let's make history together," added Korean executive committee member Chung Mong-Joon.

All that sounded fine, but the South Koreans left out any mention of the fact that they co-hosted the tournament with Japan in 2002, and that didn't seem to solve their problems.

The South Koreans left no doubt about their abilities to pull off the event, with their state-of-the-art transportation system, modern stadiums and a growing sports sponsorship business. Manchester United's Park Ji-Sung was on hand to show the sporting side of the culture. But the elephant in the room was FIFA's stay in South Korea a mere eight years ago, and it remains tough to envision a return so soon.

Copyright 2008 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com