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Russian Schoolchildren Invited to Spend Holidays in North Korean Camps

By Peter Spinella

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A high-ranking North Korean diplomat in far eastern Russia has proposed that local schoolchildren spend their holidays in North Korean youth camps in a bid to further strengthen relations between the countries, according to a statement released Tuesday.

Im Cheon Il, North Korea's general consul in the Russian city of Nakhodka, made the proposal at a meeting with the Russian republic of Yakutia's head of foreign affairs, Vladimir Vasilyev, the republic's government said on its website.

The officials also discussed promoting tourism in general and trade, particularly in agriculture, the statement said.

"Russia and Korea have traditionally had friendly relations, but now the political relationship between our countries is developing more productively than ever before," Im was quoted as saying in the statement.

Russia's relations with North Korea's reclusive government have flourished over the past year as Russia pivots eastward for diplomatic and economic support amid floundering ties with the West due to the Ukraine crisis.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is expected in May to attend Moscow's grand celebration of Victory Day, an event that many Western leaders are snubbing because of Ukraine.

North Korea's official news agency said earlier this month that the country was declaring 2015 a year of friendship with Russia as the states mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The endeavor is set to focus on developing diplomatic, business and cultural contacts and includes collaborative events in the capitals, Moscow and Pyongyang.

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