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Russian Patriotic Youth Movement Plans North Korea Summer Camp Trip

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Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency

Russia's patriotic youth organization "Movement of the First" is planning to send schoolchildren to North Korea for summer camp, the group's Chairman Grigory Gurov told Russian state-run media on Saturday.

"We just had a visit by a youth delegation to North Korea ... They have the Songdowon camp; we, respectively, have Artek, Orlenok, Smena and Okean. We are planning children's exchanges," Gurov told TASS.

The first trip to the Songdowon summer camp is planned from July 24 to Aug. 2, Gurov said.

In May, the Vladivostok-based tour company Vostok Intur also announced plans to send Russian children to Songdowon in mid-July, the company's director told NK News.

Gurov also said that his organization is planning trips to other Russia-friendly states.

"This year we 100% plan to visit China and Vietnam, we will have in-person signing of

agreements with pioneer organizations in other countries," he said.

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The "Movement of the First," created at President Vladimir Putin's behest in July 2022, was said to have been modeled on the Soviet-era "Young Pioneers" youth movement. The organization says it aims to shape children's world views "on the basis of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values."

In 2024, "Movement of the First" received $204 million in state funding as part of the state budget for "patriotic education."

The youth group's North Korea trip will coincide with the reopening of passenger train service between Vladivostok and the North Korean city of Rason following four years of closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The governor of Russia's Far East Primorye region told Interfax that the train would allow children from both countries to travel for summer vacation.

Russia and North Korea, two of the world's most heavily sanctioned countries, have deepened ties since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

During a visit to Pyongyang in June, Putin signed a mutual defense agreement with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, who offered his "full support" for the invasion of Ukraine.

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