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North Korea and Russia Begin Construction of First Road Bridge

By AFP

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The Tyumen river. **Senkaku Islands (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russia and North Korea on Wednesday began construction of their first road bridge, touting the project as a symbol of deepening ties.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin announced the launch of construction across the Tyumen River, which forms the natural border between the two countries, during a video call with Pak Thae-song, chairman of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly.

"This is truly a milestone in Russian-Korean relations," Mishustin said.

An aging Soviet-era rail bridge already spans the river, but Mishustin said the new road link was needed to boost trade and tourism, adding that it would "symbolize our shared desire to strengthen friendly ties."

The prime minister said the new route would help reduce transport costs and open up "good

prospects" for cross-border tourism.

Russian state media aired footage from the launch ceremony, showing North Koreans in suits standing in line at the construction site.

"It will become an eternal historical-memorial structure, symbolizing the unbreakable Korean-Russian friendship," Pak said, according to a Russian translation.

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Primorye region Governor Oleg Kozhemyako, who attended the event, said he hoped the bridge would increase various kinds of exchanges with North Korea, noting that "many sports enthusiasts and children go there."

Pyongyang has emerged as one of Moscow's key allies since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, admitting this week to sending thousands of troops to assist Russian forces in the Kursk region.

President Vladimir Putin said last year that North Korean summer camps had hosted children of Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine. Kozhemyako's proposal to send more children to the North for recreational activities drew criticism from some Russian parents.

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