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Russian Firms Seek North Korean Translators to Support Influx of Workers

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Yuri Smityuk / TASS

Russian companies are hiring Korean-language translators and cultural experts as thousands of North Korean laborers pour into Russia to fill construction and infrastructure jobs, the Daily Storm news outlet reported.

North Korea has emerged as one of Russia's key allies since the invasion of Ukraine, sending thousands of troops and workers to Russia. This influx has created a demand for translators to manage the thousands of North Koreans now working in the country.

Job postings for Korean interpreters — some offering salaries as high as $4,000 per month — have appeared on major Russian job sites and niche Telegram channels in recent weeks, the Daily Storm reported.

One recent listing from Strana Development, a construction firm based in Moscow, sought an interpreter fluent in Korean with knowledge of North Korean culture and etiquette to work on a construction site in the capital.

Similar vacancies have appeared on Telegram channels for translators.

A reporter from the Daily Storm called the phone number on a post seeking a Korean language specialist for work with construction teams in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region.

The reporter was told that the position was intended for North Korean citizens, adding that "groups of 30 to 35 people will be arriving every seven to 10 days and will be assigned to various construction sites."

"The main tasks are to help the workers adapt to their job sites, organize daily routines, provide safety briefings and define the scope and methods of work," the employer added.

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The influx of workers has prompted academic and military institutions to step in. The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Russia's top diplomatic training university, recently advertised a position for a Korean military translation instructor.

Applicants are required to have military experience or an advanced academic degree, with salaries ranging from 100,000 to 120,000 rubles per month ($1,000 to $1,300).

Translation services are also being sought for more formal business engagements.

The outsourcing company Excelsior recently posted an opening for an interpreter to accompany a delegation of North Korean businessmen, with duties including providing live interpretation at meetings and events.

Pavel Belenets, a representative of the Primorsky-based development firm Eskadra, said in late June that more than 150,000 North Koreans have submitted job applications to work in Russia.

He estimated that around 15,000 are currently employed, mostly in construction and restoration projects, a figure that could potentially reach 50,000 by the end of the year.

Related article: North Korea Will Send Thousands of Military Personnel to Help Rebuild Kursk Region, Shoigu Says

Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu said last month that some 6,000 North Korean "specialists" would be deployed to the Kursk border region to help with reconstruction following Ukraine's cross-border incursion.

Similar arrangements have been discussed for war-torn areas of eastern Ukraine occupied by Russian forces, including the Donbas region.

United Nations sanctions prohibit member states from hiring North Korean workers abroad due to fears that their wages are funneled directly to the regime in Pyongyang.

Human rights groups have long documented harsh conditions for North Koreans working

overseas, citing cases of surveillance, forced labor and the confiscation of salaries by the state.

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