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Russia and North Korea Open First Road Bridge Across Shared Border

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North Korean trucks drive along the newly inaugurated Novichenko bridge. **@kozhemiakoofficial / Telegram**

Russia and North Korea opened the first road bridge linking the two countries on Monday, coming after months of construction delays.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and North Korean Premier Pak Thae Song presided over a ceremony via video link to mark the official launch of traffic along the two-lane bridge, which stretches one kilometer (0.6 miles) over the Tumen River.

Mishustin hailed bilateral relations as being at an "unprecedentedly high level of comprehensive strategic partnership," adding that the bridge, which cost 9 billion rubles ($104 million), would boost trade and tourism.

A rail bridge, built in the 1950s, already connects the two countries.

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The new road bridge is named after Yakov Novichenko, a Soviet officer who saved North Korean founder Kim Il Sung by shielding him from a grenade explosion in Pyongyang in 1946.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed the formal construction agreement during a 2024 summit in Pyongyang.

Work on the bridge began in April 2025. North Korea completed its section ahead of a planned June 19, 2026 deadline, while construction delays on the Russian side pushed the opening back by several months.

According to news agency Interfax, the bridge and its newly constructed border checkpoint, which connects the Far East Primorye region with North Korea, are designed to process up to 300 vehicles and 2,300 people daily.

Some observers have said that the bridge will provide Russia and North Korea an additional route through which they can discreetly move military cargo and personnel.

In 2025, North Korea's shipments of rocket artillery, shells and short-range ballistic missiles to Russia were estimated to be between $7 billion and $13.8 billion, according to the Institute for National Security Strategy, a government-funded research institute in South Korea.

Russia and North Korea have deepened military ties since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In 2024, the two countries signed a mutual defense treaty that requires them to provide military support if either is attacked.

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