



FOREIGNERS WELCOME. Young North Korean girls hold up signboards with the names of participating countries during an opening ceremony at the Songdowon International Children's Camp, in Wonsan, North Korea. The camp, which has been operating for nearly 30 years, was originally intended mainly to deepen relations with friendly countries in the Communist or non-aligned world. But officials say they are willing to accept youth from anywhere — even the United States. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-E)

North Korea opens summer camp for kids

By Eric Talmadge
The Associated Press

WONSAN, North Korea — Summer camp in North Korea? It's got one — and it's got everything from giant water slides and a private beach to video games and volleyball courts. Oh, and, of course, a big bronze statue of the late leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il surrounded by adoring children.

After some on-the-spot guidance from North Korea's new leader, Kim Jong Un, and a major facelift, the Songdowon International Children's Camp reopened last month for this year's flock of foreign campers — more than 300 young children and teenagers from Russia, China, Vietnam, Ireland, and Tanzania.

The campers spend eight days cooking, swimming, boating, and mingling with their North Korean peers. Though heavily subsidized by the government, the camp — plus a tour of Pyongyang — costs about \$270 per foreign child.

The camp, which has been operating for nearly 30 years, was originally intended mainly to deepen relations with friendly countries in the Communist or non-aligned world. But officials say they are willing to accept youth from anywhere — even the United States.

The camp gives the participants an opportunity to see a country that remains a mystery to most outsiders, and North Korea a chance to show off the best it can offer — sleeping in air-conditioned rooms with televisions and video games is a luxury most North Korean children can't normally experience.

Still, teenagers have their own priorities.

"At the end there is a talent show," said 19-year-old Linus Jamal Faustin, who came with a group of 16 from Tanzania's Laureate International School in Dar es Salaam. "We are ready to show them all how to dance."

Pyeongchang's 2018 Olympic committee faced audit

By Jung-yoon Choi
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The organizing committee for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang has been under investigation over its preparations for the games, according to South Korean officials.

The confirmation by the Seoul-based Board of Audit and Inspection came a day after the resignation of organizing committee chief Kim Jin-sun.

Kim stepped down saying new leadership is needed. South Korean media reported he was fired by the government over poor preparations for the games, citing delays in construction of the speedskating venue and lack of progress in signing major sponsorship deals.

Audit officials said the week-long inspection of the committee looked at financing and management, but would not say whether the probe specifically targeted reported construction delays and sponsorship problems.

The results of the investigation, which began in late May and ended on July 11, were expected in three months, according to the audit agency.

Officials in the eastern Gangwon province, which includes Pyeongchang, confirmed the construction of a speedskating venue has been delayed due to a debate over how to use it after the Olympics. They said construction of other sports venues began earlier this year as previously scheduled.

The Gangwon officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to give their names under department rules, said the construction delay should have nothing to do with Kim's resignation because building issues are overseen by provincial officials, not by the organizing committee.

Kim, the former governor of Gangwon province, led the South Korean town's two unsuccessful bids for the 2010 and 2014 Olympics. In 2010, he stepped down as governor and had since served as an ambassador to Pyeongchang's bid committee for the 2018 games.

Cho Yang-ho, the South Korean business tycoon who led Pyeongchang's successful bid to host the 2018 Winter Olympics, will take charge of the local organizing



UNDER INVESTIGATION. Kim Jin-sun has resigned as president of the Pyeongchang Organizing Committee for the 2018 Winter Olympics. Kim resigned saying new leadership is needed to complete preparations for the games. A former provincial governor, he was elected president of the Pyeongchang Organizing Committee in late 2011 after Pyeongchang won the right to host the Winter Olympics for the first time in South Korea. In this February 22, 2014 file photo, Kim speaks at a press conference during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangué, File)

committee. The Hanjin Group chairman was unanimously elected in a meeting of 94 committee officials and will serve out the remainder of Kim's scheduled term, which was due to expire in October next year.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials who visited Pyeongchang recently expressed no major concerns about preparations for 2018.

IOC president Thomas Bach visited Pyeongchang in early July and said he remains confident the Koreans can organize "excellent" games.

Following Kim's resignation, the IOC said in a statement that its latest project review at the end of June had provided organizers with "a clear roadmap of activities until the end of the year."

"We have full confidence that these activities will be delivered by the POCOG team in a timely manner and using their existing processes," the IOC said. "We continue to work closely with them on their preparations for the games."

Associated Press writer Hyung-jin Kim contributed to this report.

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