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Russia-North Korea Trade Up Despite Sanctions, Reports Say

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North Korea imported more than $42 million in goods from Russia in January-November 2019. **Zuma / TASS**

Russia and North Korea ramped up trade in 2019 despite international sanctions, the South Korean news network Arirang reported, citing data from the Geneva-based International Trade Center.

Pyongyang has been under UN sanctions since 2006 over its missile and nuclear programs, which the Security Council has unanimously strengthened over the years.

Despite that, North Korea imported more than $42 million in goods from Russia in January-November 2019, Arirang reported Monday.

That's 20% higher than the $32 million in goods North Korea imported from Russia in 2018, it said.

Pyongyang's imports consisted mostly of petroleum products from Russia, followed by

animal oil, food and medical products, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Russia imported $2.3 million in goods from North Korea from January-November 2019, up from $1.9 million in 2018, Arirang reported.

Moscow admitted Thursday that it had missed a United Nations deadline to repatriate North Korean workers by Dec. 22 due to what it called "objective difficulties."

Additionally, Russian Interior Ministry statistics released Wednesday showed that the number of tourist and student visas issued by Russia to North Koreans surged in 2019.

Experts cited by Reuters suspect that many of those issued tourist visas are working illegally in Russia.

Moscow and Beijing pushed unsuccessfully in the United Nations in December for a raft of sanctions on North Korea to be lifted.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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