The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Japan Seeks Arctic Shipping, Agricultural Partnerships in Russia's Far East

January 26, 2021



Japan's Ambassador in Moscow Toyohisa Kozuki. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Japan has offered to cooperate on Arctic shipments and agricultural imports from the sparsely populated Russian Far East, the state-run news agency RIA Novosti reported Monday.

The "new concept of cooperation" comes amid Tokyo's years-long efforts to return a disputed Pacific island chain that Moscow has held since the end of World War II.

According to RIA Novosti, Japan's Ambassador in Moscow Toyohisa Kozuki sent the proposal to Russian Far East and Arctic Minister Alexei Chekunov detailing several areas of cooperation.

Among them is taking an "active part in the development" of Russia's highly touted Northern Sea Route (NSR) project that cuts shipment routes and is becoming available year-long due to rapid thawing in the Arctic region.

“Ambassador Kozuki pointed out that the NSR logistic was 40% more effective than the traditional sea routes,” RIA Novosti’s Arctic.ru project reported.

“Japanese companies already transport LNG via this route,” it added.

Related article: Russian Crowd Defends Ownership of Kurils Before Abe Visit

The sides reportedly met to discuss Japan’s proposal for energy, transportation and port infrastructure cooperation, as well as soybean and maize imports from Far East Russia and joint work in fishing and kelp cultivation.

Japan is also seeking to work with Russia on building greenhouses to grow strawberries, onions and other vegetables.

The dispute over the Russian-held islands, which Russia calls the Kurils and Japan claims as the Northern Territories, has kept the sides from striking a formal peace treaty to end World War II.

A set of constitutional changes enacted by President Vladimir Putin last summer includes a clause banning territorial concessions, which is viewed as being designed to allow Russia to keep the Kurils and Crimea.

A Russian state-funded poll in early 2019 said that 96% of the islands’ adult population opposed ceding the islands to Japan.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/01/26/japan-seeks-arctic-shipping-agricultural-partnerships-in-russias-far-east-a72724