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Japan's December Imports of Russian LNG Hit 7-Year Record

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A Russian LNG tanker in the Sakhalin region. **Nikolai Mikhalchenko / TASS**

Japan in December imported the highest monthly volume of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Russia in seven years, the RBC news website reported Wednesday, citing data from the Japanese Finance Ministry.

Japan is among the world's largest LNG importers, with Australia, Malaysia and Qatar supplying two-thirds of the energy source, while Russia accounts for 9%.

According to preliminary data, Japan shipped 833,000 metric tons of LNG from Russia last month — up 42.5% from December 2022.

RBC notes that shipments last month were the highest since February 2017, when Japan imported 844,000 metric tons of LNG from Russia.

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For the entire calendar year of 2023, however, Japan's LNG imports from Russia fell by 10.7% to 6.13 million metric tons.

Meanwhile, Japan's LNG imports from the United States rose by 34% year-on-year to 5.5 million tons, Japanese Finance Ministry data showed.

Overall, Japan's 2023 LNG imports from all suppliers fell by 8% to 66.2 million metric tons as began restarting its nuclear power plants and increased solar and wind generation.

That drop made China overtake Japan as the world's biggest LNG importer in 2023, according to Reuters.

Japan has joined its ally the United States and other Western countries in imposing sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, while scores of Japanese companies have left or suspended operations in Russia.

But Japan has said it would continue to ensure stable energy supplies in the face of increasing U.S. sanctions on Russian-led LNG projects.

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