

Putin Gives Go-Ahead to New Nuclear Icebreaker

By [AFP](#)

January 26, 2024



President Vladimir Putin attends a keel laying ceremony for the 5th Project 22220 nuclear-powered icebreaker Leningrad at the Baltic Shipyard in St. Petersburg. **Pavel Bednyakov/POOL/TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday gave the green light for a new nuclear-powered icebreaker, as Moscow seeks to step up commercial trade across its Arctic north.

Under Western sanctions for its Ukraine offensive, Russia is hoping to rely on the Northern Sea Route — a shipping lane that traverses the Arctic Ocean — to enable more trade with Asia by cutting distances and costs.

The new icebreaker, dubbed the Leningrad, will "take part in the most important exploration and research programs in the Arctic" as well as facilitate trade, Putin said in a speech at a shipyard in St. Petersburg.

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Leningrad is the old name of the city, which is also Putin's hometown.

Russia has pivoted much of its trade — particularly crucial oil and gas sales — to Asia since it was hit with sanctions for sending troops into Ukraine.

The 170-meter ship, being built by the state nuclear agency Rosatom, is designed to carve through ice to allow trailing cargo ships easier passage through the frozen northern seas.

Russia is the only country in the world that builds and operates nuclear-powered icebreakers.

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