

We Are *Tomodachi*

Japan and Russia Edition 2016



The Government of Japan

We Are *Tomodachi*

Japan and Russia Edition 2016



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Vladimir Putin have held 15 summit meetings, through which they have deepened their friendship and trust.

1. At the Kremlin in Moscow on the occasion of Abe's first official visit to Russia (April 2013). 2. In Saint Petersburg on the occasion of the G20 summit (September 2013). 3. In Sochi to attend the opening ceremony of the XXII Olympic Winter Games. With President Putin is Yume, the Japanese Akita dog that he received as a gift from the governor of Akita Prefecture in 2012 (February 2014). 4. At the opening ceremony of the Primorsky Aquarium in Vladivostok, in the construction of which Japanese companies also cooperated (September 2016). 5. The 15th bilateral summit between the two leaders, held in Lima, Peru, on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting (November 2016).

On the cover: In Beijing, China, on the occasion of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting (November 2014).

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"We Are *Tomodachi*" is a magazine published with the aim of further deepening people's understanding of the initiatives of the Government of Japan and the charms of Japan. The magazine's title, "We Are *Tomodachi*" means "We Are Friends," expressing that Japan is a friend of the countries of the world, one that will cooperate and grow together with them.

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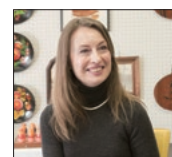


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Japan-Russia Collaborative Ties Pave Way to Future in Advanced Medicine

Aiming to Save Lives Through Application of Research Results

Since November 2010 Japan's RIKEN (Institute for Physical and Chemical Research), a comprehensive research institute in the field of natural sciences, has been conducting joint research with one of Russia's most prestigious universities, Kazan Federal University (KFU) in the Republic of Tatarstan. The joint work started in the field of low-temperature physics; later organic chemistry was added, and collaborative ties have steadily progressed. In October 2014 the Tatarstan Cancer Center also joined the cooperative arrangement; the three institutions are together conducting research in the field of medicine and genomics.

Dr. Yoshihide Hayashizaki of RIKEN, the program leader of this joint research, comments, "Russia possesses valuable sample materials that are hard to obtain in Japan, such as the results of tests carried out in space." Dr. Oleg Gusev of Russia, who is conducting research at RIKEN, explains the significance of the joint research, saying, "Russia is trying to strengthen efforts in the field of genomics. If we combine these efforts with RIKEN's world-class RNA analysis technology, we can hope for research results with high added value." By complementing one another's functions, the three parties are progressing with research in areas such as elucidating the genetic mechanisms relating to cancer.

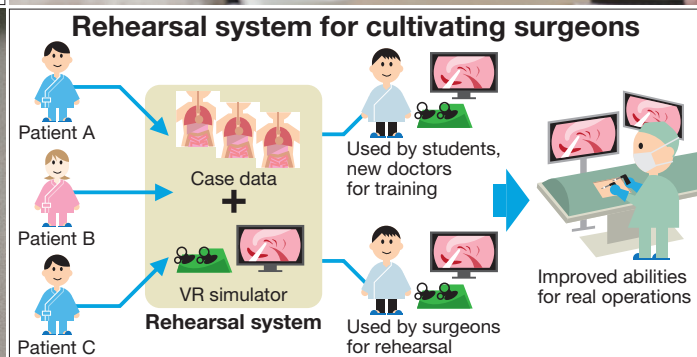
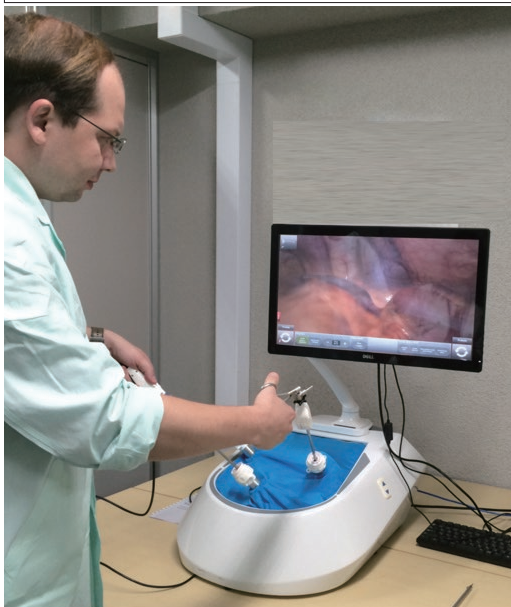
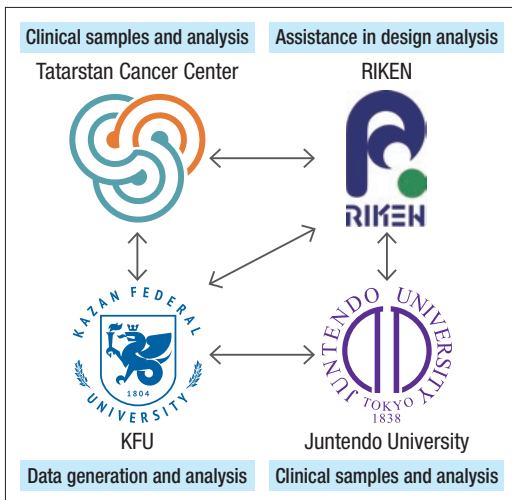
In October 2015 Juntendo University School of Medicine in Tokyo joined the circle of collaborative ties in order to move the research further forward into the clinical sphere. One of the results of the cooperative relationship is that Juntendo University has set up a training center equipped with a virtual reality (VR) simulator, robot simulator, and other state-of-the-art devices. These high-function simulators are manufactured by Eidos-Medicine, a start-up in Tatarstan, and are used in practical surgical training for students aspiring to be surgeons and for new doctors. Dr. Hayashizaki remarks, "Training with simulators has not been used very much before in Japan. Thanks to this training, we can expect an increase in the number of doctors in Japan who are skilled in difficult laparoscope operations."

At present RIKEN, Eidos-Medicine, and Dnaform, a Japanese company established through RIKEN's venture system, are jointly developing a device to easily and speedily identify infection from contagious diseases. This device is expected to be useful in preventing the spread of such diseases as HIV/AIDS, which is a serious problem in Russia. Dr. Hayashizaki says of the future prospects, "Joint research by Japan and Russia is making great strides and involves not only research institutes but also private companies. In the future collaborative ties are likely to spread to other fields as well."

Joint research by Japan and Russia benefits both countries, and the results of this research can have positive effects around the world.



Kazan Federal University (KFU) in Kazan, the capital of the Russian republic of Tatarstan, has a long history, originating from an institution founded in 1804. RIKEN and KFU established a joint research laboratory on KFU's Kazan campus (left) in January 2016 and another one on RIKEN's Yokohama campus (right) in August 2016.



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1. RIKEN, KFU, the Tatarstan Cancer Center, and Juntendo University are supplementing each other's capabilities to conduct advanced research into cancer. 2. Dr. Yoshihide Hayashizaki, a researcher who also has experience as a clinician, has developed original RNA analysis technology, such as the CAGE (Cap Analysis of Gene Expression) method, and has contributed immensely to the development of RNA research globally. 3. The VR simulator at Juntendo University's Medical Technology & Simulation Center, manufactured by Eidos-Medicine, enables students to see and touch highly realistic models of internal organs and learn both the basics and the application of laparoscopy. 4. The rehearsal system combines a VR simulator with three-dimensional data compiled from the MRI scans of various cases. One idea under consideration is to sell this system for use in training surgeons.

Japanese Control Systems Support Natural Resource Development in Russia

Helping Improve Plant Production and Safe Operations with a Proven Track Record and Reliability

Yokogawa Electric Corporation, manufacturer of industrial measurement instruments and process control equipment, started exporting products for use in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Although Japan's business with that country was limited at that time, Yokogawa's reputation as a maker of production control devices for oil, petrochemical, and other plants became established there as well. From the early 1980s, Yokogawa stepped up its activities in the Soviet Union, and since then the company has supplied control devices and systems for many plants, mainly in the field of energy.

During the Soviet era, Yokogawa did not have any opportunities for direct contact with the plants that would actually be using the systems that it supplied; in this and some other respects the business procedures were difficult. However, after the establishment of the Russian Federation, the mode of doing business changed. In 2008, Yokogawa was nominated by Taneco, an oil refining company in the Russia's Republic of Tatarstan, to be the main automation contractor (MAC) for a project to construct a petrochemical complex in Tatarstan. A MAC has the vital role of designing all the equipment related to control in the facility and being responsible for supplying all products, including those made by other companies. A MAC needs to have the engineering ability to construct systems tailored to customers' requests, and as Shuji Mori, president of Yokogawa Electric International, which is responsible for Yokogawa's overseas control device and system business, notes, "The trust that we had already built with local companies and people played an important part in our being entrusted with the role of MAC."

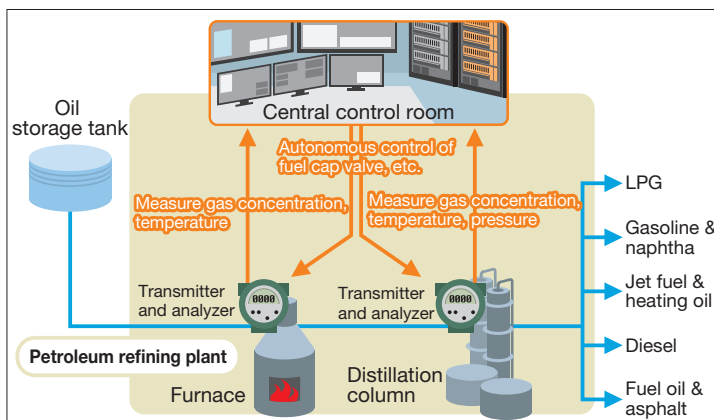
Yokogawa has been actively localizing the workforce at its subsidiary in Russia, Yokogawa Electric CIS. Out of the 412 employees, only 7 are personnel dispatched from Japan; the rest are local hires. In addition, the subsidiary has set up an education and training center in Kazan, capital of Tatarstan, jointly with the Kazan National Research Technological University (KNRTU), which turns out excellent science graduates. By training local personnel, the subsidiary is putting down roots in Russia for its activities there.

One major project in which Yokogawa has been recently involved in Russia is the construction of a liquid natural gas (LNG) production plant on the Yamal Peninsula. This large-scale facility is expected to produce 16.5 million tons annually when completed, and Yokogawa is in charge of control systems and safety instrumented systems. This facility is an important element of Russia's energy policy, and the aim is to launch operations in stages starting in 2017.

Talking about doing business in Russia, President Mori notes, "Business manners have become much easier to understand than before, and it's easier to conduct transactions. Meanwhile, the long-standing tendency to honor feelings of duty and humane sentiments in interpersonal relations still remains, and one often encounters manifestations of the warm ties between people." And regarding prospects for the future, he declares, "Customers in Russia have shifted from an initial phase of seeking to modernize Soviet-era production facilities to a new phase in which they wish to enhance quality by, for example, improving production efficiency. We hope to continue being involved in Japan-Russia economic development in compliance with relevant laws and rules."



Yokogawa is pursuing local manufacturing of its products at sites around the world, and in October 2016 a production line for pressure and differential pressure transmitters was launched at its Zernograd branch in Russia.



Production control systems in plants are Yokogawa's core product. Plant conditions are monitored based on information from sensors and analyzers. The control system plays a vital role by controlling various kinds of equipment so that relevant figures are kept at appropriate levels.



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1. Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov (center) attended the opening ceremony of the education and training center established at the Kazan National Research Technological University in September 2011. 2. President Shuji Mori of Yokogawa Electric International was sent on a long-term business trip to the Soviet Union as an engineer in 1989, his fourth year at Yokogawa, after which he repeatedly visited the country on business. He was also in charge of the acquisition of ISO 9001 certification for Yokogawa's local subsidiary in Russia in 2006. 3. Construction work proceeds at the LNG plant on the Yamal Peninsula, where the winter season takes up eight months of the year (©Jiji).

Speech of the Prime Minister

Excerpts from the Address at the 2nd Eastern Economic Forum, Vladivostok, Russia, September 3, 2016

Full text: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201609/1218950_11015.html

President Vladimir Putin, I am truly delighted at this, my first opportunity to set foot in Vladivostok, in response to your gracious invitation.

Every year in your annual address to the Federal Assembly, you highlight the development of Russia's Far East region as the most important factor for national development. Mr. President, you are looking to make Vladivostok a gateway linking Eurasia and the Pacific, am I correct? The Pacific Ocean is now poised to evolve into a free, fair, and open economic zone. The vast Eurasian land area lying beyond this city will provide further impetus to its dynamism.

President Putin, when we met not long ago in Sochi, I presented you with an eight-bullet-point proposal (See opposite page) in which I had narrowed down a list of fields where Japan can cooperate with Russia. The economies of Russia and Japan are not in rivalry. I am fully confident that ours is a relationship in which each complements the other in a magnificent way. For example, cooperation between small- and medium-sized enterprises is extremely promising. The development of energy resources and the expansion of their production capacity will be a prime example of creating a win-win situation.

Let us make the Far East Russia region a base for exports to Asia and the Pacific region while raising productivity by moving forward with the diversification of Russian industries and then taking full advantage of that. Shall we not move forward together in generating momentum for cooperation in advanced technologies and people-to-people exchanges—in other words, in investing towards the future?

Given that, President Putin, I will present to you a new proposal. Let us meet once a year in Vladivostok to confirm with each other the state of progress of these eight points.

In addition, Vladimir, one big, big issue awaits you and me down the road.

I cannot help but say that it is an unnatural state of affairs that the important neighbors of Russia and Japan, which surely have unlimited potential, have to this day not yet concluded a peace treaty.

We stand here today shouldering our respective viewpoints on history, as well as our own particular public opinion and patriotic spirit. As the leader of Japan, I am firmly convinced of the correctness of the Japanese position, while you, Vladimir, as the leader of Russia, are entirely confident of the correctness of the Russian position.

Yet if we continue on like this, this very same discussion will continue for yet more decades to come. By leaving the situation as it is, neither you nor I will be able to leave better possibilities to future generations.

Vladimir, shall our generation not be the one to have the courage to fulfill our responsibilities? Shall our two countries, Japan and Russia, not overcome all manner of difficulties to leave to the young people of the next generation a world that makes those possibilities come into full bloom? Putting an end to the unnatural state of affairs that has continued these 70 years, shall we not together carve out a new era for Japan and Russia going forward?

Vladimir, in order to carve out towards the future bilateral relations overflowing with unlimited potential, I am resolved to putting forth all my strength to advance the relationship between Japan and Russia, together with you.



Japan's Eight-Bullet-Point Proposal for Economic Cooperation with Russia

1 Cooperating to enhance medical treatment levels and extend healthy life expectancies for the Russian people

Cooperation in the fields of health promotion, preventive medicine, rehabilitation, palliative care, pediatrics, etc.

Advanced medical facility



Rehabilitation center



2 Developing comfortable and clean cities easy to live and be active in

Housing designed for extremely cold areas, waste-treatment systems, alleviation of traffic congestion, brownfield development, etc.

Advanced incineration plant



©Clean Authority of TOKYO



©Koto City Health and Sports Foundation

Heat from the waste combustion is effectively utilized to warm a pool.

Brownfield development



©IHI Corporation

Voronezh has been selected as a model city for implementation of a pilot project.



©Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd.

3 Radically expanding exchange and cooperation among medium-sized and small companies

Establishment of organization to promote business matching, support for start-ups, food-related exchanges, etc.

4 Cooperating in energy development and increasing production capacity

Diversification of petrochemical products, strengthening of collaboration from upstream through downstream, and formation of symbolic model projects.

5 Promoting industrial diversification and enhancing productivity in Russia

Enhancement of production line efficiency with equipment from Japan, including renewal of equipment.

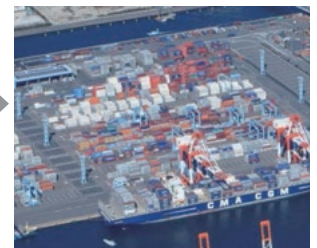
6 Developing industries and export bases in the Russian Far East

Ports, agricultural land development, seafood processing, lumber mills, airport construction, etc.

Improvement of ports



Photo: The Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia (ERINA).



Indoor plant-growing factory



Unaffected by climate, making fresh vegetables available for consumption even in midwinter.

7 Promoting cutting-edge technologies

Nuclear power, mail and ICT, agriculture and fisheries, medicine

8 Radically expanding people-to-people interaction

Interaction between universities, joint sporting events, sister-city ties, etc.

Japanese Individuals Contributing Worldwide

Young Japanese Pianist Soars from Russia

Russia, has produced many musical giants, and aspiring young musicians flock there from around the world to study. One such person is Kyohei Sorita.

Sorita started playing the piano at the age of four. Initially he only took a 30-minute lesson once a week at an ordinary piano school. But he was attracted by the instrument's timbre, and when he was 14 he began practicing intensively with the aim of becoming a pianist. "I wanted to pursue a career in which I could give people dreams," he says.

Sorita quickly revealed his talent, in recognition of which he gained admission to a prestigious music high school. Unexpected difficulties were awaiting him, however. "I had only been practicing music that I liked," he recalls, "and I had hardly done anything from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* or Mozart's works, which are the fundamentals of piano education. So while I was in high school I had to spend every day practicing the classics." His natural talent blossomed, and in 2012, while still a high school student, he won the Music Competition of Japan, a gateway to success for young musicians.

With this victory Sorita also won the chance to receive lessons from Mikhail Voskresensky, a world-famous piano instructor and performer from Russia. Voskresensky recognized his talent and paved the way for him to study in Russia. In 2014 he entered the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, the most prestigious music school in the world, becoming the first Japanese to do so at the head of the incoming class by winning the highest score.

Inspiration, along with the gravity of Russia's history and traditions, filled Sorita's student life in Moscow. The complex overtones of church bells, he remembers, sounded to him like music by Sergei Rachmaninov. He experienced Russia's music culture with all five of his senses. "Around the time when I had begun to understand a little Russian," he says, "my teacher performed a piece by Rachmaninov, and for a moment it sounded like Russian being spoken. It was a fantastic experience for me to be able to directly sense the distinctive *Weltanschauung* that Russian composers could express precisely because they were Russian musicians."

Regarding the significance of studying music in Russia, Sorita points to the tradition that has produced world-renowned musicians. "You learn under the same roof as historic musicians," he says, "from teachers who are in a direct lineage from them, practicing the same methods as they did. The voices of the great composers of the past are still alive in today's instruction." And he cannot hide his love for the country, declaring, "Wherever I may be based, Russia will always be my spiritual home."

Sorita has two major goals. One is to pass on Russia's Romantic piano style, which helped Sorita himself to grow so much, to the next generation in Japan. The other is to convey the joy of becoming one with melodies to children around the world who are unfamiliar with the classical music that he and his fellow musicians perform. "I want to achieve these goals," he declares, "even if it takes me thirty years." Sorita's fingers are singing in pursuit of these great goals.



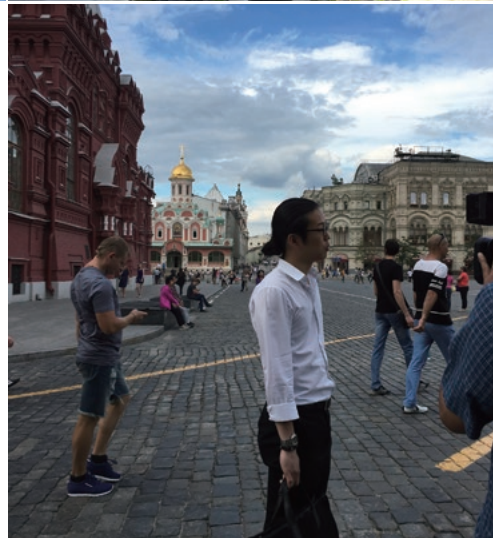
Sorita rehearses with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra at the Russian International Music Festival in 2015.

1	2	1. Chatting over tea with the maestro Mikhail Voskresensky. "I was drawn not only by his piano playing but also by his charming personality," says Sorita. 2. At the grave of Mstislav Rostropovich, the master cellist and conductor, graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, who died in 2007. For Sorita, visiting the graves where Russia's great musicians rest is one means of getting closer to the Russian musical tradition. 3. In Moscow's Red Square.
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Kyohei Sorita

Born in 1994. In elementary school he was just a typical young boy eager to become a soccer player, but later he took to the piano out of a desire to "give people dreams." After studying in Russia, he won the Città di Cantù International Piano and Orchestra Competition (Classical Section) in 2015.



Promoting Local-Level International Exchange Around the Sea of Japan

Toyama Prefecture: Making the Sea of Japan a “Sea of Peace and Exchange” Together with Russia

Toyama Prefecture, an area with a lively manufacturing sector, is about two hours from Tokyo on a newly opened line of Japan’s high-speed Shinkansen railway network, and it faces Russia across the Sea of Japan. Russia has for many years been a major trade partner for Toyama. The history of exchange between the two is long, dating back to the late nineteenth century. Also, Toyama is second only to Hokkaido in the number of residents who relocated from the Northern Territories (islands northeast of Hokkaido that were seized by the Soviet Union after World War II), and the prefecture is actively promoting participation by children and others from Toyama in the visa-free exchange program, under which they visit the Northern Territories and meet with local residents. In 1992 the prefecture entered into a sister-region relationship of with Primorsky Krai (Maritime Province), the region of Russia that faces the Sea of Japan. Since then the two have deepened their friendly interactions, both governmental and civilian, through personal exchanges, such as the mutual dispatching of municipal civil servants and youth exchange programs in fields like sports and culture.

Economic ties with Russia have also been developing vigorously. Toyama leads within Japan in imports of Siberian timber and is also actively involved in imports of nonferrous metals from Russia. On the export side, Russian demand for used cars is strong. Fushiki-Toyama Port plays a major role in supporting this lively bilateral trade. This port is served by seven regularly scheduled monthly container ship and roll-on/roll-off ship services to the Russian Far East, and its connections with Vladivostok have been expanding. In 2010, as the result of approaches to a major shipping company in Vladivostok, Fushiki-Toyama was changed from the first port of call to the last port of call. This cut the lead time for export containers from Japan from about 10 days to about 2 days, and it has supported business by lowering costs for Russian importers. In addition, the prefecture has been promoting bilateral trade via the Siberian Railway in support of the “Siberian Land Bridge” concept, linking Europe and western Russia with Japan and other East Asian locations by transporting goods not by sea, as up to now, but via the Siberian Railway. In 2014 it designated a portion of its subsidies for testing of trial shipment methods to be used in this connection. Meanwhile improvements to Fushimi-Toyama Port have been progressing. Thanks to this support, the number of containers handled by the port grew by a factor of 3.8 in the five years through 2015.

Taking advantage of its proximity to the other countries surrounding the Sea of Japan, Toyama is promoting marine environmental cooperation in collaboration with international institutions, notably the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments (NEAR), a grouping of 77 regional government bodies from six countries, including Japan and Russia. The prefecture has been the local government coordinator directing the activities of NEAR’s Subcommittee on Environment since the subcommittee’s launch in 1999. In this capacity it has taken the lead among the Japanese prefectures in NEAR. And it has strengthened its relationships of trust with the local governments of other countries through such activities as broad monitoring of yellow dust, research on shoreline driftage, and the Northeast Asian Region Hands-on Environmental Program, which aims to promote the training of young people.

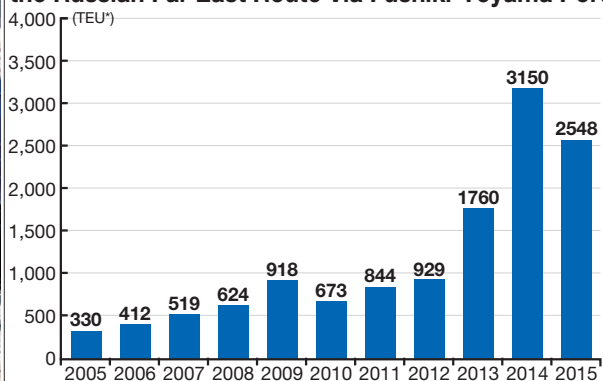
Now that Japan-Russia relations are entering a new stage, Toyama, which has built friendly ties with Russia over the course of many years, hopes to assist in further deepening international exchange among the regions facing the Sea of Japan. The prefecture is seeking to do what it can as a local government in contributing to global peace and stability by helping to turn the Sea of Japan into a “Sea of Peace and Exchange.”



Looking at this map rotated from the usual orientation, we can see that Toyama Bay is at the focal point of the fan-shaped Sea of Japan. The distance from Fushiki-Toyama Port to Vladivostok is about 830 kilometers (520 miles). Ships can travel between the two ports in two days. The Sea of Japan region encompasses Japan, Russia, China, South Korea, and North Korea.



Containers Imported or Exported on the Russian Far East Route Via Fushiki-Toyama Port



*TEU stands for twenty-foot equivalent unit, a measurement of volume based on a standard container length.



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1. In 2004, a row of Japanese cherry trees were planted in Vladivostok at the initiative of Toyama Prefecture. 2. A graph showing the number of containers for the Russian Far East route handled at Fushiki-Toyama Port. The number has increased greatly since Fushiki-Toyama was made the last port of call, and it is now 7.7 times what it was 10 years ago. 3. Young Japanese and Russian athletes pose at a Sea of Japan regional inter-high school athletics meet held in Vladivostok in 2014. These regional meets have been held annually since 1993, hosted in turn by Toyama Prefecture, Russia's Primorsky Krai, South Korea's Gangwon Province, and China's Liaoning Province, with the aim of promoting friendship through sports. 4. The 2016 Northeast Asia Environmental Partners Forum in Toyama. This forum brought together environmental specialists from Japan, Russia, and other countries. The attendants adopted the "Declaration for Environmental Partnership in Toyama," calling for active contributions in addressing environmental issues and for use of the NEAR framework.

Friends of Japan

Greater Interaction Can Bring Our Two Countries Closer

Daria Makhneva, from Siberia, recalls that she “suddenly got hooked on learning Japanese” due to the influence of an older friend in high school who was deeply interested in the Japanese language. Daria went on to study Japanese language and culture in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of Oriental Studies, at Novosibirsk State University. “Japanese is very melodious,” she says, “and I was fascinated by the beautiful flow of the intonation of the spoken language.”

For about three years after graduating from university, Daria worked in Russia as a freelance Japanese interpreter and translator. But she wanted to gain a deeper knowledge of Japanese literature and Japan itself, so she applied for a Japanese government scholarship from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Winning this scholarship, she enrolled in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology.

“It was very stimulating, as many of the classes were designed to draw out the students’ creativity, such as by having us write poems. We also had many lectures and workshops given by poets or novelists whom I admire, and it really heightened my will to study.”

After getting her master of arts degree, Daria decided to tackle the challenge of job hunting to get hired and work at a Japanese company, just like Japanese students. She got a job at an automobile manufacturer after passing the employment examination and interviews with flying colors. This year she changed employers inside the same industry, taking a job at a truck and bus manufacturer, where she is now, as in her previous working place, responsible for the Russian market. Her responsibilities cover a wide range, including surveys and analysis of market trends and of moves by rival companies, support for the launch of new products, and the handling of official paperwork for shipments. She explains, “I’m continuing to work in Japan because I like the Japanese culture of so-called *monozukuri* —the traditional culture of craftsmanship that helps even now to enhance Japan’s manufacturing production. It makes me happy to be involved in making things, and this gives me motivation to work.”

Daria’s interest in making things extends to her hobbies, and she is currently taking classes in pottery. “In Russia, age is a barrier, whatever you try to do,” she says. “Being in my late twenties, I’d be told that it’s too late for me to learn to make pottery, even as a hobby. But in Japan, you can take up a new challenge no matter how old you are. I think the freedom to try to do something you want to at any time is really wonderful.”

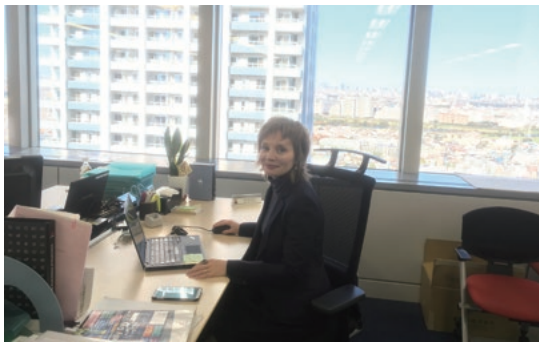
Although differences exist between Japanese and Russian lifestyles, Daria feels that especially the Russian people who live in areas close to Asia have similar ways of thinking and a similar sense of values to Japanese people. “Japanese people have the spirit of *omotenashi*, or hospitality, but Russians have quite the same spirit. Also, the way in which Russian people show respect to their seniors and superiors is the same as in Japan. I feel very strongly that if Japan and Russia would make an attempt to get closer, then a stronger relationship built on deep understanding could be attained.”

If exchanges in various fields increase, aiding mutual understanding, then later generations may look back and on the twenty-first century as the age when Japan and Russia grew much closer. Daria sincerely hopes that such a future will come to pass.



Daria Makhneva

A native of Akademgorodok in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk (Akademgorodok is an educational and scientific center that planners studied when designing Japan's Tsukuba Science City). Works in the International Sales Department at the headquarters of Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus Corporation. Is interested in making things and in the Japanese culture of craftsmanship. Hopes one day to try making *washi*, traditional handmade Japanese paper. Currently resides in Japan with her husband, who is Japanese.



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1. At her workplace. 2. Experiencing how to assemble parts in a factory during company training. 3. Daria has learned about Japanese culture while taking classes in pottery making. 4. With international students from the Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo.

The JET Programme: A Great Way to Experience Japan

Realizing the Importance of Heart-to-Heart Exchange in Japan

I was born in Dalnegorsk, a small town in Russia's Primorsky Krai (Maritime Province) facing the Sea of Japan. I had an affinity for Japan from an early age. My father told me, "Over the sea lies Japan," and I replied, "They should build a bridge from here to there." My uncle, who was a sailor, used to bring back presents from Japan—sweets with pretty illustrations on their wrappings. I can still remember being very impressed by the elaborateness of those illustrations.

After that, when I first visited Japan, I quickly fell in love with the country. I was most impressed by the beautiful sound of the Japanese language. It sounded as if people were singing. I wanted to learn that sound, so I entered the Far Eastern State University of Humanities in Khabarovsk to study the Japanese language and then worked as a freelance interpreter and translator.

Since I longed to use my Japanese language skills in Japan and serve as a bridge between Russia and Japan, the JET Programme was like a godsend for me. The city of Niigata, where I was assigned to work as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR), has been engaged in exchange with Russia for a long time, and it is home to many Russian residents.

My role as a CIR is to convey the attractions of Russia to Japanese and to supply information relating to Japanese society and culture to Russians. I am a bit of a shy person, though, so at first I would get nervous when I had to give presentations about Russian culture or chat in the *Oshaberi* Salon (*oshaberi* means "chatting" in Japanese). I had a battle with stage fright, but seeing the smiling faces of the elderly audience as they tried hard to understand me, I realized that exchange is not just built on the spoken word and that it is enough if people sense Russia through me. Since then, I have been able to engage in heart-to-heart exchange, inviting Japanese to my home to enjoy Russian cuisine and visiting Japanese homes to try homemade Japanese cooking.

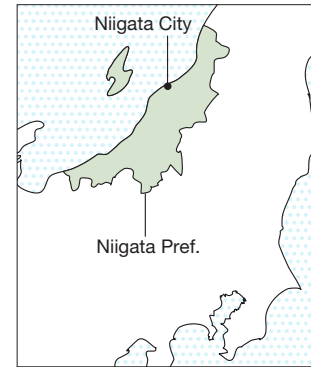
The most memorable event in my activities so far occurred in the summer of this year, when I took a group of 19 Japanese students aged up to 16 years to Khabarovsk and Birobidzhan, which have sister-city ties with Niigata. We visited schools and a lifelong education center, and the students experienced singing and dancing with local children, as well as Russian food. Seeing them cheerfully communicate using gestures, simple English, and smartphone translation services, I felt how important it is to have a desire to communicate, even if you don't have sufficient linguistic skills to do so.

My favorite Japanese expression is *ichigo ichie*, which means "treasure every encounter." My encounter with JET has been a meaningful one. My dream of building a bridge from Russia to Japan has come true—I myself have become such a bridge. Making the most of my JET experience, I want to continue contributing to exchange between Japan and Russia.



Yuliya Im

Born in Dalnegorsk in Russia. Has been working as a CIR in Niigata since August 2015. Says that she "enjoys every minute" of life in Japan with her fourth-grade son, whom she brought over from Russia after she got settled here.



Explaining a matryoshka doll to visitors at the Niigata International Friendship Center.



- | | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | | 2 | 1. Making blini pancakes, a Russian favorite, during a course on understanding Russia. 2. Giving a talk about Russia in ethnic costume. 3. Chatting with elementary school children during a school visit. |
| 3 | | | |

About the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme began in 1987 with the goal of promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations, and is now one of the world's largest international exchange programs. JET participants are placed in every region of Japan and work in one of three positions: assistant language teachers (ALTs), coordinators for international relations (CIRs), or sports exchange advisors (SEAs). In 2016, the JET Programme welcomed 4,952 participants, and currently there are approximately 62,000 alumni from 65 countries living in all parts of the world.



The JET Programme official website
<http://jetprogramme.org/en/>

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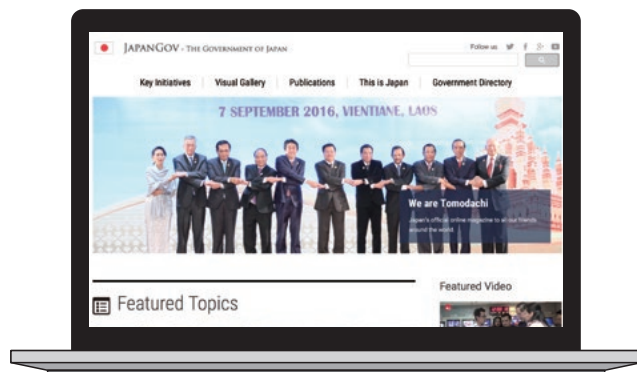
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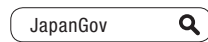
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