

Russia national day

Prospects for relationship development

Evgeny Afanasiev
AMBASSADOR OF RUSSIA

First of all, I would like to welcome all the readers of The Japan Times and express my appreciation for your attention on our national holiday — Russia Day. The Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation was adopted on June 12, 1990. This day became a holiday in 1992, and in 2002 was officially named Russia Day.

One of the most significant events in the life of our country this year was the success of the XXII Winter Olympic Games and XI Winter Paralympic Games held in Sochi. This was the first Olympics in the history of modern Russia. In addition to a purely domestic aspect, the Sochi Olympics had a huge international dimension.



Preparations for the Games gave a big impetus to the development of the transport, energy and tourism infrastructure not only in the city of Sochi — the pearl of the Russian Black Sea coast — but to the entire Caucasus region of our country. There were tens of thousands of new jobs created and more importantly, we now have the opportunity to use the Olympic legacy to improve living standards and promote sports and tourism for years to come. Besides, the Olympics and Paralympics have become a unique platform for friendly contact between the people of many countries, the communication of young people and the promotion of the ideals of peace and cooperation worldwide.

With this in mind, I would like to once again congratulate the Japan Times readers and all the people of Japan with the election of Tokyo as the host city for the 2020 Summer Olympics. This choice was supported in Russia and created conditions for mutually ben-

eficial cooperation in the preparation and conduct of this large-scale international sports event — from the exchange of experience in the field of athletic training techniques to security and environmental issues as well as the training of volunteers.

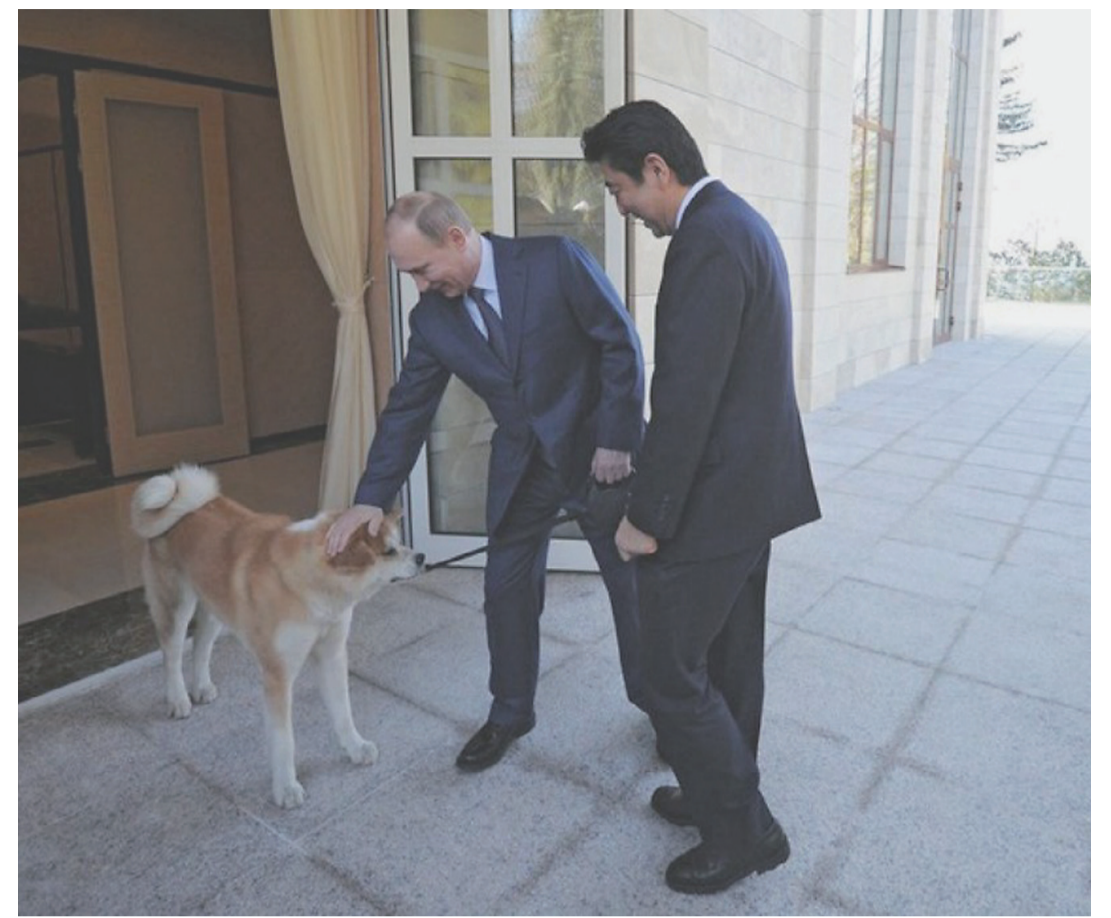
Regarding relations between our countries, I would like to note that we consider Japan to be one of the key partners of the Russian Federation in the Asia-Pacific region. We highly appreciate the fact that last year the level of bilateral relations in various fields has been significantly upgraded. Intensive political dialogue is a good example of this tendency. Since April 2013 there have been five meetings between the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, including an official visit by Abe to Russia and the meeting of the two leaders on the sidelines of the Olympic Games in Sochi. A new format of political dialogue was

launched last year — “two-plus-two” talks — with the ministers of foreign affairs and defense of both countries taking part. Regular contacts were established between the Security Council of the Russian Federation and the newly created National Security Council of Japan. The first round of consultations at the deputy foreign minister level on a peace treaty was held in January.

We appreciate what has been done and what is being done in the practical areas of our relations: trade, investment cooperation and in the spheres of culture and humanitarian exchanges. Just a few days ago, the opening ceremony of the 9th Festival of Russian Culture in Japan was held in Tokyo with the participation of Sergey Naryshkin, the chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, co-chair of the organizing committee of the festival. Abe noted in his welcoming address to the participants and guests of the festival,

that annual festivals of Russian culture provide an excellent opportunity for the Japanese public to further their acquaintance with the great history and art of Russia. The same warm congratulatory message was sent to the Festival participants by Putin.

Dynamic development of Russian-Japanese economic and trade relations is under way. Turnover increased by 4 percent and reached a record of \$35 billion in 2013. Japan accounts for about 3.6 percent of Russia's foreign trade and ranks ninth among Russia's top trading partners. Russia, in turn, is Japan's 14th largest trading partner. In my view, these figures are an eloquent testament to what has been achieved so far as well as the impressive untapped potential for cooperation between the two countries. I hope that further reciprocal steps taken by Japanese and Russian businessmen will contribute to the development of large-scale



President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, with Yume, an Akita dog given to him in 2012 as a gift from Akita Prefecture, Japan, welcome Prime Minister Shinzo Abe prior to a bilateral summit meeting on Feb. 8 in Sochi, Russia. EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

Working toward a stronger, beneficial partnership

Yoshiro Mori
FORMER PRIME MINISTER

On the occasion of Russia Day, may I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the people and the government of Russia.

June 12, 1990 is the commemorative day when the “new-born Russia” was founded after Russia declared national sovereignty and also is the day when the country took the first new step in its relationship with Japan.

It is clear now that Japan-



Russo relations have reached a mature level in the 24 years since, with talks between Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russia's President Vladimir Putin held five times since April last year.

In February this year, Russia's first Winter Olympic Games were held in Sochi, and I was in attendance. While there, I was deeply touched by the warm hospitality and the high-level ability of all the parties concerned in organizing the games. As you know, Tokyo will host the summer Olympic Games in 2020. As the president of the organizing committee, I have been

preparing for the successful holding of the games, based on lessons I have learned from the Sochi experience.

On June 2, the ninth Russian Cultural Festival in Japan opened splendidly, with the honorable presence of Sergey Naryshkin, the chairman of the State Duma. The last eight festivals brought us a surprising number of attendees, totaling more than 11 million. Additionally, a variety of events are held every year in Russia to introduce Japanese culture and the people of both countries are becoming more interested in their counterparts' cultures. Specifically, this year is the Ja-

pan-Russia Martial Exchange Year, with many exchange programs being held for Japanese martial arts such as judo, kendo, karate and for sambo, Russia's national sport.

I consider it my life-long duty to develop relations between Japan and Russia. Behind that are the last wishes of my father, Shigeki, who dedicated himself to developing relations between the two countries in the Soviet age, and my own experience to see with my own eyes the sincerity of the new-born Russia in creating a new country overcoming many hardships. As the honorary chairman of the multiparty Japan-Russia Parliamentarians' Friendship League, I will dedicate myself

to further develop relations between the two countries. Amid the increasing importance of the Asia-Pacific region in the world, the two countries, carrying significant responsibilities for security and prosperity in the region, need to solve the Northern Territories issue to conclude a peace treaty for further development of relations. While both countries will further expand relations for collateral benefits as important partners, I truly expect this biggest concern will be solved.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my congratulations, again, to all the people of Russia, and I am praying for Russia's peace and prosperity from the bottom of my heart.



The 2014 Winter Olympics opening ceremony on Feb. 7 in Sochi, Russia EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

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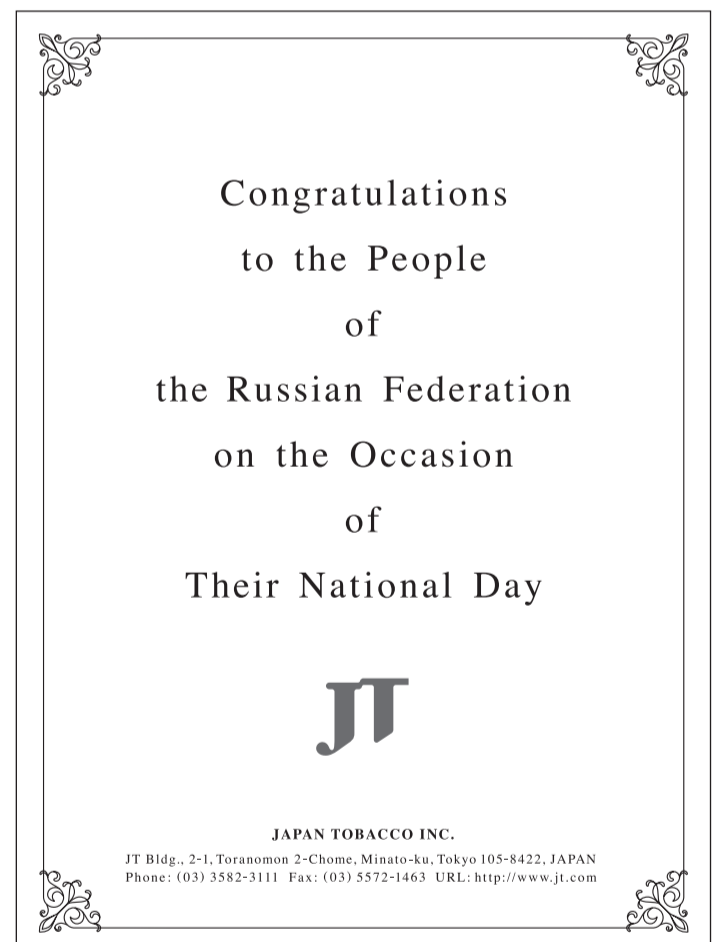
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Russia national day



Located in Moscow's Red Square, the Cathedral of the Protection of Most Holy Theotokos on the Moat, also known as St. Basil's Cathedral, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

Furthering friendly relationship

Kunio Hatoyama
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-RUSSIA
ASSOCIATION

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the people and the government of Russia on the occasion of Russia Day.

The Japan-Russia Association, for which I am serving as the chairman, held Far East forums in Vladivostok last year and the year before.

During the forums, we reviewed the Japan-Russo situation that produced a human exchange of just 160,000, while economic relations are



not expanding with the Northern Territories issue unresolved and a peace treaty uncompleted.

Foreign countries outline their strategies for international politics assuming Japan and Russia will not be connected with strong ties. If Japan and Russia do establish a close and cooperative relationship, those foreign countries will have to revise their strategies. If that happens, I have said that the world will need to take it seriously and take necessary steps to respond to it.

Millennium Bank President Mikhail Baidakov and Anatoly Gromyko, a professor at Moscow State University, agreed with me and have proposed a meeting of experts, including

Russian Railways President Vladimir Yakunin.

On May 13 this year, I met Yakunin in Moscow and we are now in the final stages of arranging the first "Japan-Russo Development Belt Forum" in July.

I consider it the duty of the Japan-Russia Association to be a catalyst in any endeavor that could develop the friendship between Japan and Russia.

I am expecting a successful conclusion of the forum, which is the first big project for the Japan-Russia Association, as well as a big improvement in the Japan-Russo relations in the future and the further development of friendship between the two countries.

Ties based on trust, respect, bilateral exchange

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

business partnerships, which would benefit both countries' mutual interests. At present, negotiations on a number of interesting projects in engineering, medicine, urban environment, agriculture, energy efficiency and renewable energy, more efficient use of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Northern Sea Route for transportation in Europe are in progress.

Tourist exchanges are expanding, with the number of Japanese tourists visiting Russia in 2013 reaching about 55,000. The number of Russians who visited Japan remained at about the same level of 50,000. I believe that in terms of geographical proximity, mutual cultural heritage, unique recreational opportunities both in Russia and Japan, there is a considerable potential for further development of bilateral tourist exchanges.

During the April 2013 summit in Moscow, Russian and Japanese leaders declared 2014 as the Year of the Russian-Japanese exchanges in the field of martial arts. We are sure the events held within the framework of this will be interesting to a wide range of sports fans in our countries. The exchange program includes a series of competitions, friendly matches, judicial seminars and joint training sessions between Russian and Japanese athletes, including juniors. Among the events that have already taken place, I would like to highlight the annual All-Japan Sambo Tournament for the Cup of

President Vladimir Putin, which was held in February in Yokohama. As the central event of the exchange program we are expecting the visit to Japan by the Russian delegation, which will give a presentation of traditional Russian martial arts in October this year. In turn, a large-scale event of the All Japan Martial Arts Centre "Nippon Budokan" will be held this November in Moscow. We hope that the result of this mutual work will not only bring positive emotions to the participants and spectators of the events, but will also popularize martial arts in particular and sports in general in Russia and Japan, as well as contribute to further strengthening of friendly relations between the people of our countries.

Russian-Japanese relations in general have great potential for development. We believe that all the planned political contacts must be implemented. Russian-Japanese cooperation is a two way street as it is equally necessary for both countries. These relations are important on their own and they should not be dependent of the situations in one or another third country. As for the differences in the approaches to domestic or international issues, they should be resolved through dialogue and not through refusal to communicate or use of "sanctions." Moreover, such an approach is not conducive to the solution of any of the existing problems but can only aggravate them.

The future of our country is

inextricably linked with the Asia-Pacific region. Our foreign policy in the Asia Pacific proceeds from the recognition of the crucial importance of creating a modern configuration of interstate relations in the region corresponding to current-day realities. Such a system must simultaneously provide broad opportunities for the promotion of multilateral trade, economic and investment cooperation, resolution of existing multidimensional security challenges, prevention of the emergence of new threats and to serve to form an integrated economic and political space. We advocate a nondiscriminatory regional order without imposition of unilateral approaches and division into leaders and followers and where interstate communication will be based on trust and mutual respect.

We are interested in developing political, trade, economic, humanitarian and cultural ties with the countries of the region, including Japan. This is especially important for the regions of Siberia and the Russian Far East, taking into consideration the fact that their accelerated development is one of the priorities of the Russian government.

I am convinced that stable and progressive development of Russian-Japanese cooperation in an entire range of areas will strengthen trust between the people of Russia and Japan and will be an important factor for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

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