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## **RUSSIA LAUNCHES FIBER-OPTIC COMMUNICATION LINE ON DISPUTED ISLANDS**

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Russia on Tuesday launched a submarine fiber-optic communication line linking Russia's Sakhalin island with the Southern Kuril Islands, known in Japan as the Northern Territories.

The new optical line, connecting Sakhalin with three of the four Pacific islands claimed by both Russia and Japan, was part of the program "social and economic development of the Kuril Islands for 2016-2025," according to Russia's TASS news agency.

It provided local residents and business organizations with high-speed Internet access, while the cost of Internet subscribers has been significantly reduced.

The decades-long dispute over the islands has prevented the two countries from signing a post-World War II peace treaty and hindered their diplomatic and trade relations.

High-speed Internet in the Southern Kuril Islands is not a commercial project but has "social significance," said Sergey Ivanov, Russian Presidential Representative for Environmental Protection, Ecology and Transport.

The full commercial operation of the line is scheduled to start by the end of March after relevant licenses are issued.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-02/28/c\\_137855492.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-02/28/c_137855492.htm)

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