

Nicaragua national day

Toward new economic growth with social justice

Saul Arana Castellon
AMBASSADOR OF NICARAGUA

On the occasion of the 190th anniversary of the independence of Nicaragua, we extend our regards to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. We wish for the full recovery of Japan and the normalization



of all the communities affected by the earthquake and tsunami in March, to whom we express our total solidarity.

Nicaragua comes to this national holiday as a more united and democratic society, better prepared to address the great challenges of economic and social development that face the country.

As a result of the economic policies of President Daniel Ortega, Nicaragua shows promising macroeconomic signs, with 25 percent growth in the gross do-

mestic product (GDP) and a 77 percent increase in its exports in the last five years. Moreover, foreign investment has increased by 33 percent during the same period, revealing growing confidence by the domestic and international private sector in the potential and safety of the country. These policies have been possible due to the climate of peace and social stability that Nicaragua enjoys today and the increasingly close alliance among government, producers and workers.

Mere economic growth, however, is not an end for the government of Nicaragua but rather a means to resolve the great challenges of the country: to combat poverty, generate employment and develop local economies, as expressed so well by President Ortega in January 2011. As part of the strategy for economic growth, the government has made enormous efforts to improve the standard of living of the majority of the population. Access to services and



Landmark: The Cathedral of Leon, where a lion statue guards the tomb of Nicaragua's beloved poet Ruben Dario, is a UNESCO World Heritage site, listed in 2011. EMBASSY OF NICARAGUA

social benefits, such as education, health care, social security, housing and land ownership, has increased considerably.

The results of these policies are already evident. Overall poverty has decreased by 5.8 percent from 2005 to the present, while extreme poverty has dropped by 2.6 percent over the same period. Infant mortality has been reduced by 53.7 percent, while maternal mortality has decreased by 15.7 percent. Illiteracy has been cut from 22 percent in 2006 to 3.33 percent in 2010.

Furthermore, as part of the government's educational policy, efforts have been made to eliminate any fee that limits access to elementary school and to guarantee free textbooks and the school feeding program. In addition,

the government has endeavored to facilitate credit for small- and medium-scale agricultural production, especially for families headed by women. This program has already benefitted 60,000 households, significant coverage in a country of approximately 5.5 million inhabitants. The most striking impact of the credit policies is the 15 percent increase of the economically active population in the rural sector from 2009 to 2010. Women represent 67 percent of this new economically active population.

Today's Nicaraguan society is more involved and better positioned in mutually beneficial international relations. In 2007, we joined the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). As a member of this alliance,

Nicaragua has obtained oil at preferential prices in order to lower energy costs; soft loans to finance agricultural production and social programs in the rural sector; and access to fair trade mechanisms to export agricultural goods and livestock. The ALBA programs have been fundamental to the stability and growth of the Nicaraguan economy. In August of this year, we celebrated Nicaragua's entrance into the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), a new opportunity for technological and commercial exchange.

Nicaragua continues actively participating in the Central American Integration System, or SICA, in order to promote economic, commerce and security policies of common interest.

In Nicaragua, we are conscious that this progress, while a reason for optimism, is only the beginning of a long process of change. Therefore, the country has undertaken to negotiate proposals for medium- and long-range projects to ensure the sustainability of the achievements obtained thus far. The most noteworthy of these is the Deep Water Port Project in Monkey Point, a \$350 million investment in port infrastructure that will connect Nicaragua through its Caribbean coast with maritime traffic from South America, the Gulf of Fonseca, the East Coast of the United States and Europe. Monkey Point, which will be developed under a 30-year concession by the Brazilian consortium, Andrade Gutiérrez, will

be regionally competitive. Interconnection is one of the strengths of the project, which includes the construction of a 75-km-long road connecting Monkey Point with Nueva Guinea, as well as a railroad line that will reduce the distance between Nicaragua's Atlantic and Pacific coasts to five hours.

Presidential and parliamentary elections will be held in November. The citizen rights that have prevailed in Nicaragua since the overthrow of the Somoquista dictatorship in 1979 will make it possible for this to be a democratic occasion of great importance, in which Nicaraguans freely express their political will.

The peoples of Nicaragua and Japan have been united through ties of friendship and cooperation for more than 75 years. The achievements of the government of President Ortega have been optimized by generous Japanese aid. Assistance from Japan, approximately \$800 million over the period from 1990 to 2010, has contributed to the economic and social development of Nicaragua through the construction of bridges, roads and infrastructure for schools and health centers. Moreover, the friendship between Nicaragua and Japan has been strengthened by the presence in our country of Japanese volunteers, a total of 500 such since 1990.

On this national holiday, we reiterate our friendship with and gratitude to the government of Japan and its admirable people, who have provided a tremendous lesson on discipline, dignity and compassion to the world in facing the Great East Japan



National pride: The San Juan River, Nicaragua's natural heritage

Enhancing bilateral relations

Yasutoshi Nishimura
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-NICARAGUA PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE



On the occasion of the 190th independence day, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of the Republic of Nicaragua.

For this year, there have been continuous visits by your country's Cabinet members, including Foreign Minister Samuel Santos, which have enhanced bilateral relations. As a result of those efforts, economic ties between the two countries have been all the more expanded. Exports to Japan have increased 79 percent and imports from Japan have increased 120 percent compared with figures from last year.

In my capacity as the president of this parliamentary friendship league, I am determined to make continuous efforts to develop a trustworthy relationship between both countries and to further expand economic relations. I am planning to visit the Republic of Nicaragua in the near future.

I would like to pray for the great prosperity of the Republic of Nicaragua with best wishes.

Earthquake.

On this day commemorating the independence of Central America, we greet the Nicaraguan community residing in Japan, wishing that their families enjoy well-being and remain

united and in solidarity during this time of great challenges. Likewise, we extend our regards to the communities residing in Japan from our sister countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica.

Congratulations
to the People of Nicaragua on the 190th Anniversary
of Their Independence Day

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Yoshikazu Morita

Yoshikazu Morita

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