

Nicaragua national day

Friendship group builds business bonds with Nicaragua

The entire nation of Nicaragua celebrates Sept. 15, the day on which the country won independence from Spain in 1821.

Nicaragua is the largest country in the Central American isthmus, with an area of about 130,000 sq. km. Its estimated population was 5.85 million in July 2014 and life expectancy at birth is 72.7 years.

The Nicaraguan economy is growing. Gross domestic product surged to \$11.26 billion in 2013 from \$6.79 billion in 2006, while the inflation rate dropped to 5.7 percent from 9.4 percent in the same time frame. Japan imports coffee, honey, beef, shrimps and clothing from Nicaragua.

As the Nicaraguan economy booms, private-sector interac-

tions between Japan and Nicaragua become more active.

The Japan Nicaragua Friendship Association, based in Tokyo, is among those who congratulate the national day of the Central American country.

The friendship association also celebrates its 21st anniversary this year.

"Nicaragua has developed a lot," said Go Nagasaka, representative senior managing director of Koizumi Co., a housing product trading company that also serves as the representative office of the Japan Nicaragua Friendship Association.

The association's main job is to arrange various exchange events for Nicaraguan politicians coming to Japan. For example, it helps arrange a

meeting event with Nicaraguan delegates and Japanese companies to encourage the latter to invest in the Central American country.

In one of the recent activities, the association organized a tour for 12 Japanese businessmen, who are members of the association, to visit Nicaragua from Aug. 2 to 6.

The delegate met Nicaragua's foreign affairs minister, along with José Adan Aguerri, the president of the Superior Council of Private Businesses (COSEP), and other COSEP members to exchange information.

A discussion with COSEP was covered in local media, including the newspaper El Nuevo Diario.

The delegate also went to see

a Yazaki Corp. factory in Leon, western Nicaragua. Yazaki manufactures automobile parts and other equipment.

As a token of friendship between the two countries, the association has made 100 soccer balls with "Japan" and "Nicaragua" written on them and donated them to Nicaragua, handing them directly to Nicaraguan Ambassador to Japan Saul Arana Castellon, who was home on vacation when the association delegate visited.

Also, the association had a meeting with Paul Oquist, the minister and private secretary for domestic policy of President Daniel Ortega, when he came to Japan in May. Oquist spoke about the country's plan to construct a canal connect-

ing the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

The association holds a general assembly of its members once a year. This year, it was at the Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo in Shinjuku on July 16. The assembly was joined by association members, who are mainly employees of companies that do businesses with Koizumi, Lower House member Shinako Tsuchiya and other politicians.

Ana Patricia Elvir Maldonado, the Nicaraguan ambassador's wife, delivered a speech about the current Nicaraguan situation.

Koizumi serves as the representative office of the association because the company's former chairman, Tsutomu Nagasaka, was a close friend of the late Yoshihiko Tsuchiya, a veteran politician who worked hard on supporting Nicaragua when he

was an Upper House member.

Koizumi, which imports products and materials from mainly Asian countries, such as China, South Korea and Taiwan, and has a golf-resort hotel in the U.S., does not currently have business with Nicaragua, but "would like to consider some kind of business involvement," Nagasaka said.

Nagasaka also stressed that Nicaragua is a good place to visit as it is a safe country in Central America that is rich in agricultural products, with cows and coffee trees, he

added. Also, Nicaragua is known for its volcanic activity, which has shaped a beautiful landscape.

The association's jobs also include raising awareness of Nicaragua in Japan.

"Japanese are not very familiar with Nicaragua. Not very many Japanese have gone there or know people from there. Some may have heard Nicaraguans are strong in boxing and baseball. We would like to use information like that to raise awareness of Nicaragua," Nagasaka said.



Above, a soccer ball with "Japan" and "Nicaragua" written on it is shown. It is one of 100 that the Japan Nicaragua Friendship Association has made and donated to Nicaragua. Right, Japan Nicaragua Friendship Association delegates and members of the Superior Council of Private Businesses (COSEP) in Nicaragua have a meeting in the Central American country in August. JAPAN NICARAGUA FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION



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Congratulations to the People of Nicaragua on the 193rd Anniversary of Their Independence Day

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