

Paraguay national day

Paraguay continues on sustainable growth track

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AMBASSADOR OF PARAGUAY

This year marks the 204th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of Paraguay. On this great occasion, I would like to express my deep reverence to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and all the members of the Imperial family. I would like to also convey my heartfelt felicitations and warm greetings to H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Japanese government, and the people of Japan.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to The Japan Times and its sponsors for providing me with this opportunity to reach its distinguished readers and subscribers.

The relationship between Japan and Paraguay date back formally to Nov. 17, 1919 when a Friendship Treaty was signed by then Minister of Foreign Affairs and prominent historical figure Dr. Eusebio Ayala and the Ambassador of Japan, Shichita Tatsuke. The bilateral ties binding both countries have since always been characterized by a very deeply respectful and a warm friendship interrupted only briefly during World War II.

However, our very cordial and strong bilateral relationship during the past 95 years is definitely not accidental nor a product of chance. Many people have worked and continue

working with grand enthusiasm to further integrate our people and deepen our relationships. In this respect, the Japanese immigrants to Paraguay and their descendants play a vital role inextricably bridging our two countries together.

The Japanese immigrants and their descendants have, through their exceptional work, made a major contribution in the agricultural development of Paraguay. However, it is how they have established themselves in Paraguay and overcome many difficulties and challenges in their new adopted country that have earned them the profound respect and deeply rooted admiration by the Paraguayan people. Their indomitable spirit of sacrifice, hard work, and perseverance have rightfully been acknowledged and recognized by the Paraguayan people. Concomitantly, it is the societal openness, respect, and warmth from the Paraguayan people that have in turn helped the Japanese immigrants be successful in their adoptive country. Together, they will soon celebrate a major milestone with the 80th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Paraguay.

However, it was not until the 1950s that programmed migrations to Paraguay were first organized by the Japanese government. Currently, there are about 7,000 Japanese descendants living in the country.

The Japanese immigrants initially grew garden vegetables and fruit, playing a major role in introducing the tomato

and other vegetables to the Paraguayan diet. In more recent years, Japanese descendants, who continue to be major contributors to the economic development of Paraguay, produce great portions of the country's soybeans.

In addition, Japan's aid and cooperation from the 1950's onward made a significant contribution and vital support to the development of Paraguay. Japan's non-reimbursable cooperation, long-term, low-interest loans and technical support and cooperation to Paraguay have made a significant contribution in all areas of much need for the country in infrastructure, agriculture, health, and education.

Japan's official development assistance is the most important aid for economic growth in Paraguay. This solid relationship can be explained thanks primarily to the open and always welcoming doors Paraguay has historically had for the Japanese people and from Japan's extensive ODA and contributions of its descendants.

It is within this context of these thriving and historically deep bilateral relations that Paraguay maintains with Japan that we had the very fruitful visit of the President of Paraguay H.E. Horacio Cartes in 2014. On the assumption of the presidency in 2013, Cartes made manifest his vision of a Paraguay that is open and connected to the world, with a high index of environmentally sustainable development, guarantor of the security of its citizens and private property, with a strong and prominent

role and participation for women and a young generation that is well-trained to lead the country, under a government that is fraternal, fair, transparent and has zero tolerance for corruption.

The relationship extends beyond common diplomatic relationships, with profound ties to the Imperial family with four visits dating back to the 1978 visit by then Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko; followed in 1986 by Prince and Princess Hitachi visiting to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Japanese immigration. Additionally, in 1999, Prince and Princess Takamado visited for the South American Soccer Cup, in which Japan participated as a special guest. Most recently, Prince Akishino visited in 2006 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Paraguay. These visits transcend the formal ties and strengthen the strong bonds that unite the people of Paraguay and Japan.

Centrally and strategically located in the heart of the South American continent, Paraguay's outstanding and consistent economic growth in recent years has attracted the attention of many investors and businesses not only from neighboring countries, but also from the entire world.

In 2013, Paraguay's gross domestic product (GDP) growth was at 13.6 percent, outpacing most economies in the region and the world, fueled prominently by the production of more than 8 million tons of soybeans (making Paraguay the fourth largest exporter in the world) and a



Clockwise from top left, urban scenery of Asuncion; Itaipu Dam; a woman playing Paraguayan harp; Paraguayan folk dancers EMBASSY OF PARAGUAY

record export of high quality beef (sixth largest exporter in the world). In addition, Paraguay is the second largest stevia producer, the sixth largest producer of corn, and the 10th largest exporter of wheat, making Paraguay a true agricultural and meat production powerhouse compared with other countries.

Moreover, to accelerate the modernization of the country's main infrastructures, an estimated \$160 billion in investment will be deployed by 2017 in airports, roads, and ports, which in itself is projected to sustain between 4 percent to 6

percent GDP growth.

The constant macroeconomic stability (historically low inflation rate, 22.6 percent of GDP in international reserves and double the amount of the total foreign debt), free market based currency exchange and free unrestricted flow of capital, the lowest tax rates in the region for businesses and one of the most advantageous tax incentive laws for direct national and foreign investment in the region make Paraguay a high priority destination for major investment. Also contributing to Paraguay's investment attrac-

tiveness is a young and abundant labor force, bountiful, clean and renewable energy from hydroelectric power and a strategic location to service the main economies in Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela). In short, Paraguay is a true land of yet unexplored opportunities. My very own personal experiences as an immigrant and an entrepreneur further attest to how Paraguay, despite its difficulties and shortcomings, is unequivocally a country where many dreams and hopes can become a beautiful reality.

The Japan-Paraguay Parlia-

mentary League and the Nippon-Paraguay Friendship Association have both played a part in strengthening the bilateral relations between our countries, and I would like to express my sincere appreciation for their efforts.

To conclude, as Ambassador of the Republic of Paraguay in Japan, I am very happy to be able to celebrate the 204th Anniversary of our Independence Day together with my fellow Paraguayan citizens, who live in Japan alongside our Japanese friends, and share the joy and depth of our friendship and respect.

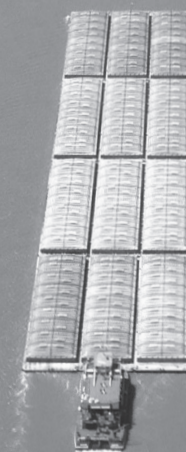


The government palace (left) and a rider participating in jineteada, a traditional sport in Paraguay. EMBASSY OF PARAGUAY

Congratulations

to the Republic of Paraguay
on the 204th Anniversary of Independence

The history of Tsuneishi group in Paraguay started from emigration projects in the 1950s. Since then, the Group has been assisting the Japanese emigrants and communities in Paraguay through various activities and by building a good relationship with them.



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