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SECURING THE FUTURE FOR NATION AND REGION

Since the opening of its eponymous canal in 1914, Panama has occupied an important position in the global economy by linking the Pacific and Atlantic oceans and shortening shipping routes between Europe and Asia.

Looking beyond its strengths in trade and logistics, the country aims to become an international center of finance, services and technology, serving as the primary gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean.

With the expansion of the Panama Canal beginning in 2002, the small country has set up free trade zones and modernized the canal's facilities to attract more foreign investors, which now regard Panama as a stable and business-friendly location to grow their operations.

Growth rooted in collaboration

As Panama strengthens its partnerships across Latin America, Japan remains a reliable partner in terms of capital and technology.

Companies such as Nippon Koei, through its Latin America and Caribbean division, have been active in developing infrastructure and sustainable projects that contribute not only to Panama's progress, but also to regional advancement.

"We are fully committed to the growth and development of Panama. Yet, our commitment is even broader: to develop the social and economic infrastructure of the countries in the entire region and to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants in harmony with nature," said **Nippon Koei LAC President Masanobu Shimosaka.**

ALEX PAGLIUCA / UNSPLASH

One of global trade's most important seaways, the Panama Canal provides invaluable economic and social benefits for the tiny nation and its Latin American neighbors.

His statement underscores the broader vision driving Japanese engagement in Latin America.

In neighboring Colombia, this sense of regional partnership is equally strong. **Juvenal Diaz**, the governor of Santander province, expressed his shared commitment to inclusive development, one that will benefit not just businesses, but the local communities that host them.

"Our goal is to make Santander prosperous, secure and sustainable. With these three principles working in different projects, we can make it happen. This is for the well-being of the people of Santander and for the development of economic and social programs in our territory," he said.

Such localized leadership is crucial in complementing Panama's efforts to deepen regional cooperation, as economic corridors and cross-border infrastructure depend on shared prosperity.

Building financial bridges

From financial supervision to consulting and investor services, Latin America's evolving business environment is opening new doors for collaboration.

"We actively seek the best support for our clients and we provide that support for international investors who are trying to open markets in Latin America," said **G&D Consulting Group General Director Jeisson Gomez.**

At the policy level, governments are strengthening their capital markets to ensure long-term growth.

"Our main preoccupation is really to enlarge this market. The goal is to have a financial market so strong that it also pushes a strong economic development," said **Cesar Ferrari, head of Colombia's financial oversight bureau.**

Panama's transformation, along with close collaboration with its neighbors, has shown how long-term planning, sound policy and international cooperation can create a model for sustainable regional growth. ■

NIPPON KOEI LAC: BUILDING THE IMPORTANT INFRASTRUCTURE WITH PEOPLE AT ITS CORE

Among the firms involved in infrastructure development in Latin America and the Caribbean, **Nippon Koei Latin America – Caribbean** has distinguished itself by prioritizing people when designing and managing its projects, ensuring they have minimal negative impact on society and the environment.

A subsidiary of Japan's oldest engineering consulting firm, Nippon Koei LAC has formed a solid reputation for reliability since its establishment in 2003. Based in Panama City, it has played a key role in the country's urban transformation, building wastewater treatment plants, road networks and metro systems.

One of its flagship projects is Line 3 of the Panama Metro, a multibillion-dollar transport link that will improve connectivity, reduce travel times and raise the quality of life for thousands of commuters in Panama. Its role in the project includes strategy planning, technical supervision and coordination to guarantee the quality and functionality of the first Japanese monorail system in Latin America.

The 25-kilometer Panama Metro Line 3 will have 14 stations and include an elevated viaduct, a 4.5-km underwater tunnel beneath the Panama Canal, as well as advanced train control, signaling and telecommunications systems. Due for completion by 2028, it will use sustainable energy and state-of-the-art technology for its electromechanics and platform doors.

"Acting with integrity and contributing to society through technology and engineering has always been our value. Our business does not end upon project completion as we still provide services after design and construction," **said Nippon Koei LAC President Masanobu Shimosaka**.

NKLAC

Nippon Koei LAC President Masanobu Shimosaka

Apart from the metro project, Nippon Koei has also participated in wastewater treatment improvements, environmental management studies for the Panama Canal Basin, as well as other projects that combine engineering precision with environmental expertise.

Nippon Koei's people-first approach is also evident in their operations in other regional markets.

In Colombia, where operations began in 2011, Nippon Koei has specialized in water, sanitation and transport infrastructure. And in Peru, it runs a project management office for infrastructure initiatives, including partnerships between the Japanese and Peruvian governments in the northern region of the country. In Brazil, it applies the same integrated approach on environmental sustainability and green infrastructure development projects.

Looking ahead, Nippon Koei is evaluating opportunities to expand in Honduras and Chile with the same ethos of quality, sustainability and social responsibility.

"Infrastructure for the people, this is our focus now. Between 2021 and 2030, especially in Latin America, there will be significant infrastructure needs and Nippon Koei will contribute to providing sustainable, resilient and inclusive solutions to make the world a better place," Shimosaka said. ■

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Nuevo Arraijan is one of 14 stations making up Panama's Metro Line 3.

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Panama's Metro Line 3 will pass beneath the Panama Canal.