

# *Japanese Business Leaders Eager to Expand Trade with Cuba*

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Havana, May 5 (RHC) — A Japanese business delegation has expressed bright prospects for expanded trade with Cuba as Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida pitched a new level of exchanges with the island nation, Japanese media reports.

Tomoyoshi Kondo led a 30-strong delegation from 15 companies as chief of the Japan-Cuba business association to coincide with Kishida's visit, the first by a Japanese foreign minister.

Cuba's proximity to the United States and South America makes it an ideal production base, Kondo said, adding that the Caribbean nation's economic prospects are very favorable.

The delegation included representatives of trading companies Sumitomo Corp., Marubeni Corp. and Toyota Tsusho Corp. as well as automakers Mazda Corp. and Hino Motors Ltd., and heavy machinery maker Komatsu Ltd.

The group also toured the Mariel special development zone on the outskirts of the capital, and other areas, on May 2nd.

Following the recent improvement of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Japanese interest in the Caribbean island has soared.

“Cuba has the most potential to prosper in this region, given its 11 million population and high level of education,” said an official in the trade industry. “All Japanese companies are eager to jump on the bandwagon.”

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