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Barranquilla

No. 3 - April 2009



YOUR INVESTMENT PROMOTION AGENCY IN THE STATE OF ATLÁNTICO

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Letter of the Director

Today we present to you the third edition of "Click on Barranquilla", our electronic newsletter with contents on the current economy of the Region, the dynamics of investment in the Department of Atlántico and activities that have motivated the promotion of our territory as a place for investment.

The completion of the dredging works of the access channel to the port, the various scenarios we have used to promote within our strategic allies, the competitive advantages of Barranquilla and the Department of Atlántico and the implementation of a strategy for the promotion of investment for the sector by BPO & IT Logistics, are some of the issues you will find in this Newsletter.

We hope you do enjoy it.

Tatyana Orozco
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Agenda

General Meeting of Affiliates

Barranquilla.
April 28, 4:00 pm

International Theater Gathering 2009

Barranquilla.
April 20 to 30

Andean congress of Call Centers, Contact Centers and CRM 2009

Bogotá.
May 20 through 22



They invest in Barranquilla

→ COMPLETED DREDGING WORKS FOR THE DEEPENING OF THE DRAUGHT OF THE ACCESS CHANNEL

After four years the dredging works to deepen the access channel between the mouth of the Magdalena River at Bocas de Ceniza and the port terminals have been successfully completed. Today, due to an investment of sixty four million pesos executed by the Ministry of Transportation through the National Roads' Institute (INVIAS), Barranquilla has a Port close to 40 feet draught in its access channel.

The work started on October 19th 2005 with the purpose of improving conditions of the Port, generate an increase commercial activity and thus and create more jobs for the inhabitants of Barranquilla.

"If we manage to maintain a draught of 40 feet at Bocas de Ceniza, vessels of 34 thousand tons and larger ones will be able to arrive to this port. I am sure that this dynamic will allow the growth of the Port and it will generate more jobs"**(1)**, stated Alex Char, mayor of Barranquilla.

The dredging process was based in the construction of spurs with small - 40 / 60 cm diameter rocks. Subsequently this layer was covered with larger rocks, between one and four tons, to protect the smaller material and prevent it from being flushed by the river.

In this manner, the city of Barranquilla and the Department of Atlántico have today a better port that allows new investments, generates more jobs for the local population and brings greater prestige. This improvement, position us right next to cities such as Panama, where the port is also being modernized in order to provide better services to all vessels.

(1) Taken from El Heraldo newspaper, January 30th 2009.

→ A HEALTH COMPLEX IS BEING BUILT IN THE DEPARTMENT WITH CHILEAN INVESTMENT

Clínica Portoazul is a project arisen from the association between Clínica del Country S.A. and Sabbag Radiólogos S.A. with the purpose of developing the largest health complex in the Atlantic Seaboard. Furthermore, the Chilean consortium Empresas Banmédica, that has the largest hotel offer in that country and also has investments in Colombia and Perú, endorse the project.

The project shall be located in the municipality of Puerto Colombia, at the International Caribbean Center, an exclusive zone that also will include shopping malls and top - level hotels. Clínica Portoazul will occupy an area of 21.000 square meter including parking areas, more than 100 beds for health care, 12 at the ICU, 4 for newborn IUC and a fully - equipped Emergency service.

Also there will be a second tower with 138 offices for physicians of various disciplines as well as commercial stores and offices all oriented towards special health services.

In general, Clínica Portoazul will offer high technology's services as a network of monitors that shall allow physicians to review diagnostic images. Additionally, the Clinic will have a clinical laboratory, a respiratory therapy unit, a gastroenterology unit, a cardiology unit, a physical therapy unit and an ophthalmology unit.

According to the Operators of the project, Clínica Portoazul contemplates investments exceeding 120.000 million Pesos, and it will generate more than 500 direct jobs.

→ COMPETITION FOR INVESTMENTS GROWS

In the race to attract new investment for the regions, the major cities of the country created specialized agencies to promote their cities and to search for companies who will settle in their areas. After six years of the creation of the first agency the results of its activities are now beginning to notice.

ProBarranquilla, the official agency for the promotion of investment in the city and the Department of Atlántico since 2003, completed in the previous year 53 new projects that will be developed throughout the next two years and that will require an investment of approximately US\$2,000 million. One of these projects is the industrial complex jointly developed by Acesco and Votorantim.

According to the agency's Manager, Tatiana Orozco, the promotion activities are focused in six strategic sectors with the highest potential in the region: chemical, metallurgical, construction materials, tourism, call centers, and logistics. Since its creation, ProBarranquilla has been a key actor for the establishment of more than one hundred companies that have invested approximately US\$800 million and also have generated more than 10,700 jobs in the region.

"Invest in Bogotá", established in 2006 due to an initiative of the Office of the Mayor of Bogotá and the Chamber of Commerce, attracted, in its first year of operation, six investment projects for an amount of US\$137 million. In 2008, the amount was considerably high and it will be revealed at the end of this month. Executive Director Virgilio Barco Isakson, explains that Bogotá has not yet attained its potential as a destination for investment, specially in sectors with high aggregate value focused on exports.

The "Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana" (ACI) (Agency for Cooperation and Investment in Medellín and its Metropolitan Area) has ambitious goals. Its Director, Luz Mónica Pérez, states that the goal is to attain new investments for US\$400 million by 2010. "We already have one hundred potential investors and we are working with them to provide them all the information necessary as well as appropriate conditions for them to invest in Antioquia", she states.

Cartagena is also taking part in the investment race with the agency "Cartagena de Indias Puerta de las Américas", created three years ago. "Since it was established, the agency has served more than one hundred businessmen and it has contributed to the arrival of more than 30 new companies to the city, that invested US\$206 million and generated 6,990 direct and indirect jobs", stated the Executive Director Sofia Lemaitre.

Now is the turn for "Agencia de Promoción de Inversión del Valle del Cauca" (API), (Agency for the Promotion of Investment in Valle del Cauca), that has been created recently with the purpose of consolidate the Department as the leader for the attraction of productive capital.

Thus, region and cities are competing for potential investors, both national as well as international. They know that the arrival of new companies contribute to economic development, generates revenue, creates jobs and improves the quality of life of their citizens.

Taken from Revista Dinero magazine, January 2009

ProBarranquilla News

→ THE BATTLE OF BARRANQUILLA

Within the framework of the war against corruption in the public administration, one of the most interesting battles is taking place in Barranquilla.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the city lived an era of extraordinary growth, but then, fell into the hands of negative political leaderships. Fortunately, in the last years, local authorities and association's leaders, with the support of the Ministry of Treasury (Ministerio de Hacienda) and the Prosecutors Office (Fiscalía), have joint efforts to face corruption problems and turn Barranquilla into a booming industrial and commercial port, an attractive place for investments and a vibrant city that generates decent jobs for all of its citizens.

It's fair to say that entrepreneurs and civic leaders tried before to promote positive initiatives, even though they didn't find the right partners at the local government. But since the 2007 elections, a new wind blows in Barranquilla. The alliance between public officials and civic leaders has brought important benefits to the city.

The Mayor's Office showed courage and legitimacy when it figured out the way to break down damaging concession contracts in areas like tax collecting and public lighting. These contracts granted to opportunistic friends of politicians and paramilitary groups, stole billions of pesos from the city's budget. Therefore, after months of analysis, Mayor Alejandro Char canceled those contracts.

The contractors responded with law suits and all the legal tools available to them. But after a couple of blunders, justice endorsed the Mayor's actions. This week, in response to a lawsuit from the former public lighting contractor, the decision of the Mayor got the support of a second instance judge. At the same time, Colombia's Constitutional Court, decided to go through with the lawsuit on the case of the tax collection's concession contract. In the past months, after many suspicious procedures that forced the intervention of the Procedures Office, it was discovered that the software used to distribute legal cases among the different courts was altered.

The decisions of the Mayor's Office has brought resources for new investments in social and infrastructure projects, and has bolstered taxpayers' confidence. This year, the collection of property, industry and trade taxes has exceeded all records. Thanks to that, Barranquilla's Government will finance a plan to channel street watercourses, invest more than 200 millions of dollars in education and health, and lay concrete on more kilometers of city streets than Bogotá.

The Battle of Barranquilla is going to have consequences in dozens of municipalities that copied the system of concession contracts for tax collecting and public lighting. But this Battle goes beyond court houses.

The Mayor's Office, the Governor's Office and the local leaders, in strong alliance with ProBarranquilla, are sponsoring several initiatives to bring national and international investments to the region, and have achieved satisfying results in the last years. For instance, despite the economic world crisis, a Brazilian company will start in a few months the construction of a gigantic complex of 1,400 millions of dollars for steel production that will generate more than 10,000 jobs in the region. In addition, companies like Telefonica, Postobon, Promigas, Sempertex, Argos, Monómeros, Sociedad Portuaria and the six industrial parks, are developing mayor investment projects in the region.

Therefore, it's necessary to pay attention to the final outcome of this long struggle, because besides its national implication, the Battle may guaranty a new age of economic progress, job creation and investments in Barranquilla. http://www.eltiempo.com/opinion/forolectores/la-batalla-de-barranquilla_4938248-1

Taken from El Tiempo, april 2, 2009.

→ PLAN FOR THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF BARRANQUILLA AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ATLÁNTICO CONTINUES

Within the plan for the internationalization of the Region and through contacts made by the Chamber of Commerce of Guadalajara, ProBarranquilla had the opportunity to invite, during March 11 and 12, a group of 9 Spanish entrepreneurs representing the real estate sector of that country. The visitors pronounce a high interest in Barranquilla to develop business options including the aforementioned sector.

During the visit, the entrepreneurs met representatives of the Free Zones and the Regional Port Society of Baranquilla (Sociedad Portuaria Regional de Barranquilla). The agenda took into consideration the competitive advantages of the city regarding port infrastructure, spaces for business, amongst others, and thus enhanced the promotion of the Department of Atlántico as a strategic place for investment,

Also, ProBarranquilla invited a Commercial Mission of the State of Louisiana organized by the Colombo – American Chamber of Commerce that was held in Barranquilla during March 12 and 13, with the purpose of facilitating the commercial approach between the State of Louisiana and Colombian producers of equipment for chemical processes, generation of power, welding, storage and transportation of bulk materials, port services and modular equipment for oil and gas production processes.

The meeting with 30 businessmen from 11 companies of the State of Louisiana was held within the framework of a work-breakfast at the Dann Carlton hotel.

Furthermore for the 22nd of April we are expecting the visit of the commercial mission from the Chamber of Commerce of Miami and Coral Gables. The meeting is also organized between the Chamber of Commerce of Barranquilla and the Colombo – American Chamber of Commerce. The interest of foreign entrepreneurs in Barranquilla and the Department of Atlántico shows that the region has won a position in their minds as an excellent destination for their business.

→ PROBARRANQUILLA WITH CONSULTANCY FROM OCO GLOBAL

In order to promote the economic and social development of Barranquilla and of the Department of Atlántico, ProBarranquilla has been carrying out a six sector's promotion strategy for investment. The strategic sectors are metallurgical, chemical, construction materials, BPO & IT, logistics and transportation and tourism.

As part of the strategy, ProBarranquilla subcontracted with the sponsorship of the Chamber of Commerce of Barranquilla, the Office of the District Mayor, and the Office of the Governor of the Department of Atlántico, the British firm OCO Global Ltd. OCO associated with the FDI Intelligence (investment division of Financial Times Ltd.) who delivered a proposal for the design and implementation of an investment – promotion strategy in the BPO & IT Logistics sector.

OCO Global Ltd is one of the most important investment firms in the world with more than 200 projects with investment – promotion agencies all over the globe., As part of OCO's relevant experience are their work with UK Trade & Investment, Invest in Sweden, Enterprise Ireland, Invest Hong Kong and Invest in France.

During the first visit to he Department of Atlántico, the vice-president of the firm OCO Glotal Ltd., Dr. Sieb Hoogstra, held a workshop about better practices for promotion for foreign investment. The event counted with the participation of important representatives of local institutions such as the Office of the District Mayor, the Office of the Governor of the Department of Atlántico, Sociedad Portuaria Regional de Barranquilla, the Barranquilla Free Zone, the inter-guild and inter-business Committee of the Department of Atlántico, amongst others.

→ PROMOTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATLÁNTICO AT NETHERLANDS

The Ministry of Economy of The Netherlands, with the help of Proexport, issued an invitation to ProBarranquilla, ACI Medellín and Invest in Bogotá to participate in the Study Visit 2009 to learn about promotion strategies of The Netherlands' investment promotion agency, and the promotional experiences of The Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. This Study Visit was held between March 9 and 13 this year.

This invitation was issued thanks to the regional cooperation agreement between ProBarranquilla and Proexport. Its purpose is to work as a team, positioning the different regions as possible hubs attracting potential investors.

Initially the delegation was formed by Juan Carlos González (Vice-president for investment - PROEXPORT), Jorge Luis Gutiérrez (Director of Market Research - PROEXPORT), Camilo Llinás (Legal Director - PROEXPORT), Ximena Montenegro (Attorney - PROEXPORT), Tatyana Orozco (Executive Director - ProBarranquilla) and Mónica Ramírez (Invest in Bogotá).

Taking occasion of the "Study Visit Holanda 2009" a meeting was held at The Hague, involving Dutch investors and Colombian investors working at The Netherlands and the invitation was made directly by the Government of The Netherlands. Proexport made a presentation about Colombia and ProBarranquilla had the opportunity to promote and show the competitive advantages of the Region in order to attract foreign investment to the city.

→ BARRANQUILLA DOES NOT LIMIT WITH THE CARIBBEAN SEA, BUT IS AS OPEN AS THE OCEAN

A cosmopolitan city is a city that is open to influences, new people and business. This is Barranquilla, a city that opens up to the businessmen without reserves, permanently making the affirmation of its origins, with Arab, German, Italian, Spanish imprints ...

We could prove this during the interesting and enriching visit formulated by Pro Barranquilla, who excelled with the organization and variety of the agenda. Everything worked as expected!

With a wind resembling a hurricane, the flavor of arepa`e huevo (cornmeal cake filled with an egg) and the red, vibrant color of “corozo” juice (a local fruit), we visited La Cayena Free Zone, a project led by the company Alfa, thanks to a recent regulation that allows the development of Free Zones by the Private Sector. Less than 4 years ago, it existed in Colombia only 12 Free Zones, but currently there are 27 and we are expecting about 72 in some few years. It is possible that many of these might be placed near Barranquilla, located 20 kilometers away from the sea, and 120 from Cartagena and Santa Marta, the core of the Caribbean Region!

La Cayena is located close to the town of Juan Mina, at the north-west of Barranquilla. Felipe Arroyo, Manager of the project, explained to us the advanced and almost sold in full project, especially to companies related with construction industry. It will generate 4.000 jobs and will include a day nursery, a school, and playground. Alberto Ospina’s company President of Alfagres, we visited the factory that is already operating in its initial installation, and will produce a total of 7 million square meters of ceramics per year, 80% of the total for exportation.

Mayor Alejandro Char and the Governor of the Department of Atlántico, Eduardo Verano de la Rosa, highlighted the fact that the meeting managed to gather various sectors around important issues such as efficiency, development, and anti-corruption, indispensable conditions for a promising future for Barranquilla. The city has 100% coverage in education and in 2 more years there will be 15 new public schools. Also, Barranquilla is the second bilingual city in Colombia, after Bogotá.

An important fact: All of the administrations accounts are planned and re-structured.

We had the opportunity to meet many businessmen,- born or adopted in Barranquilla, - all of them excited about the possibility to open the first regional chapter of the Forum of Presidents, a purpose that, thanks to the support and commitment of Guillermo Heins, will become a reality pretty soon.

Outstanding and impressive the Caribbean Cultural Park, modern center dedicated to the promotion of the natural, cultural and historic heritage of the Colombian Caribbean. With more than 20.000 square meters, it will count with the Caribbean Museum, where visitors will be able to learn about the rich diversity of the region and that will embed in the people of the region a sense of belonging, and being proud of it.

There is another project that will become a reality within 14 months: ZOFIA (Atlántico International Free Zone), with a total area of 1.200.000 square meters, strategically located in Galapa (2 kms. from the Circunvalar road of Barranquilla), with all of the rules and services currently required for this type of facilities. In 2006 the National Government invested 26 million Dollars for the installation of wing dams in the Magdalena River. This means that within 8 months the draught will be 40 feet. What about the traditional dredges? They are no longer used here; they are leased to other ports.

At La Cueva restaurant, with its incredible eternalized elephant footprints (a whim of the famous deceased painter, Alejandro Obregón during a night of bohemia), we were able to re-live the then famous gatherings of the literate of old times and we almost got our photo taken with our Nobel Prize winner, Gabriel García Márquez.

And the night of La Guacherna finally arrived! This evidences the phrase: “Who lives it, enjoys it”. An incredible combination of joy and melancholy, thin and fat, young and old, spontaneity and coordination, and a joyful expression of social integration under the common denominator of enjoying the Carnival, justly recognized as cultural heritage of humankind.

And, to bring to a spectacular closure, we did visit Aprodefa, an impressive project located in the south - western part of the city, founded and led by Audes Jiménez -Social Driver of Ashoka- example of improvement and community participation based upon integration and formation of democratic values, starting with the family. Aprodefa is the axis where more than 80 organizations in the Colombian Caribbean have gathered strength, changing and empowering the lives of many people.

Summarizing, the visit to Barranquilla was the event that allowed us to evidence the reasons why Barranquilla, day by day, is again earning its past nickname of the “Golden Gate of Colombia”. Indeed it is a golden gate, ,not only for those arriving by sea, but also for the “cahcaços” (name given to people from the interior of the country, particularly from the capital city) who could not resist its huge growth possibilities and the charm and the gallantry of its people.

Taken from Foropress, digital media of the Forum of Presidents of Bogotá.

→ New Affiliates



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¿Do you need more reasons to invest in Barranquilla? www.probarranquilla.org

With total confidentiality, ProBarranquilla offers support speeding-up of processes at public and private institutions and the preparation of agendas and logistic support at visits to the city. Also searching for commercial contacts, recruiting and selection of suitable personnel.

We offer information about legal and tax systems, labor laws, the regulation of imports and exports, procedures for an establishment of a business, costs of utilities and the availability of land, warehouses and apartments, amongst others.



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