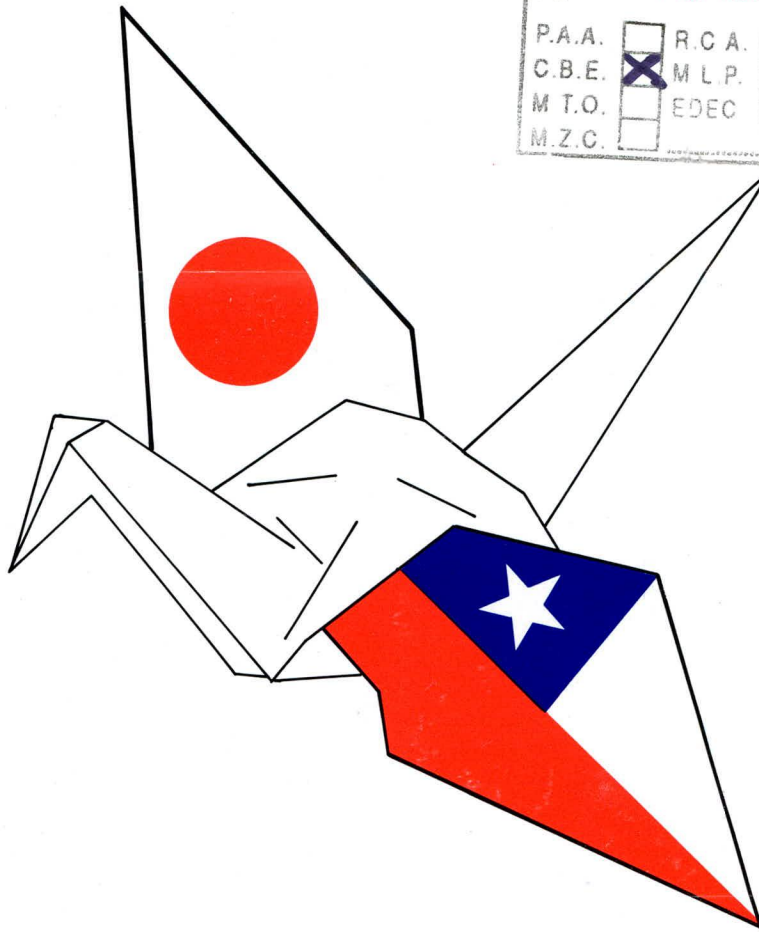


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# **ULTIMAS NOTICIAS DEL JAPON**

(Semana del 1 al 7 de noviembre, 1993)

V I P ' 9 3

**( DISTRIBUCION EXCLUSIVA )**

SMALL BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO LABOR

TOWARD 40-HOUR WEEK

A proposal to revise the labor standards law to reduce Japan's legal workweek from its current maximum of 44 to 40 hours was voted into law by the Diet on June 2, 1993. The revised law will go into effect on April 1, 1994. Even before it was passed, nearly all large businesses had already switched over to a 40-hour workweek. From here out, the effort to pare the workweek will be centered on small and medium-sized companies, which have lagged behind the large ones in the movement to cut labor hours.

The effort to reduce the legal workweek began in April 1988, when the Labor Standards Law reduced it from 48 to 46 hours. A second revision of the law in April 1991 cut it to 44 hours. And in 1992, the Government released its medium-term economic plan, covering fiscal years 1992-96, for realizing a better quality of life for citizens. The plan set out, among other things, to reduce the maximum number of hours in the legal working year. The target it set forth for the total number of working hours (regular plus overtime) annually was 1,800, and for regular hours alone it was 1,654.

The latest revision to the Labor Standards Law was made in order to realize this objective. The revision stipulates, among other things, that all businesses adopt a 40-hour workweek and provide at least 10 days of paid personal leave annually to employees who have been working for them for six months or more. (Before the revision, employees had to have been working for a company for one year in order to receive that amount of paid personal leave). The revised law applies to all businesses, but smaller businesses that are having difficulty cutting working hours in time for the 1994 deadline will be given until the end of 1996 to comply.

According to a survey by the Labor Ministry, as of the end of 1992 over 80 percent of companies with over 1,000 employees had made the transition to a 40-hour workweek; however, a mere 20 percent of companies employing 100 or fewer people had done so. For this reason, the ministry plans to recommend to the smaller companies that they reduce their workweeks by stages.

(The material herein is based on domestic Japanese news sources and is offered for reference purposes. It does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the Japanese Government or of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

## DEEP-SEA VESSEL TO EXPLORE MARIANA TRENCH

Testing began in June 1993 of an unstaffed deep-sea exploration vessel capable of diving to the floor of the Mariana Trench at a depth of 10,924 meters. The vessel "Kaiko" (Trench) is expected to begin full scale operation after completing testing off the Japanese shore in June and at the Mariana Trench starting this fall.

Kaiko was built in November of 1992 by the Japan Marine Science and Technology Center of the Science of Technology Agency, which also developed the piloted deep-sea probe "Shinkai (Deep-Sea) 6500" capable of diving to 6,000 meters.

Kaiko is comprised of two units - a launcher (5.2 meters long, 2.6 meters wide, and 2.0 meters high) and a sea floor rover (3.1 meters by 2.0 meters by 2.3 meters). After being lowered together, the rover separates from the launcher about a hundred meters above the ocean floor. This unique formula was adopted so that the rover can move around safely and freely in the ocean depths.

The launcher will be connected to a vessel at the sea surface by a 12,000 - meter-long cable with a diameter of 4.4 centimeters. This cable will contain both copper wire to conduct electricity and fiberoptics for communication. A cable of this width and length is subject to currents

and other strong forces in the depths of the sea, and it will be the launcher's role to withstand these forces so that they do not affect the movement of the rover.

The rover will be connected to the launcher by a separate cable with a diameter of 2.8 centimeters and a length of 250 meters. Thanks to the launcher, the rover's seven propellers - three to guide the vehicle up and down and four to move it across the ocean floor - will be able to steer the vehicle around effortlessly.

The rover will capture visual images of the ocean depths with five television cameras, and the images will be digitally transmitted through fiberoptics to the operation center aboard the vessel at the sea surface. An operator will be able to control the launcher's and the rover's movements while watching a screen. The rover will also be able to collect and bring back minerals and living organisms from the sea floor.

It is hoped that Kaiko, once in operation, and Shinkai 6500 will provide greater insight into deep sea topography as it relates to seismological predictions and into the ecology of deep-sea microorganisms.

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