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More Japanese businesses for Gwinnett as Deal wraps up Asia trade mission

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By Christopher Seward

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Gov. Nathan Deal and a delegation of about 40 government and business representatives wrapped up a weeklong trade and tourism mission to Asia on Thursday with the announcement of three more Japanese companies' opening offices in **Gwinnett County**.

The delegation, which traveled to China and Japan, is expected to return to Georgia on Friday, according to the state's Department of Economic Development.

On Thursday, Deal's office announced HAMACO Industries Corp., Okaya USA Inc. and Idaka America Inc. have opened offices in Gwinnett, joining more than 70 Japanese companies that already have operations or offices in the county.

HAMACO, a subsidiary of Hamada Industry Co. Ltd., designs and manufactures material-handling equipment, such as hydraulic foot-operated lift tables and carts. The subsidiary opened an office in the Gwinnett Corporate Center in Norcross.

Okaya, which also opened an office in the Gwinnett Corporate Center, processes, imports and exports iron and steel products.

Idaka America, which has an office in Duluth, distributes machinery and spare parts to the automobile industry.

Georgia opened its first international economic development office in Tokyo in 1973. There are about 350 Japanese companies in the state today.

"The more investment we see from Japan, the more we can point to the value of having a business-friendly state," Deal said in announcing the three new Japanese offices.

County officials also hope the presence of the companies near Gwinnett Place will help revitalize the area, which has struggled in the face of retail and other development in other parts of the county.

