



**MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY**  
**News Release**

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*Tourism is Everybody's Business!*

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**SAIPAN TROPICAL EKIDEN DRAWS 19 TEAMS**

**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – The Marianas Visitors Authority's (MVA) inaugural Saipan Tropical Ekiden on Saturday (June 4) attracted 19 local and international teams for is the newest annual signature event of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Sixteen local teams and three teams from Japan joined the 3-hour relay event aimed at building teamwork and camaraderie. Teams took off at 5 p.m. from Garapan Fishing Base, traversing through downtown Garapan before sunset and then along the tiki torch-lit Froilan C. Tenorio Beach Rd. Pathway until 8 p.m.

“The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Saipan Tropical Ekiden was a success, and it was great to have both local and off-island teams joining,” said MVA Managing Director Chris Concepcion. “We’re happy to introduce this type of team-building competition to the community and hope to see it grow.”

Finishing first in this year's event with 23 laps in 2:52:38 was Agape Boys A Team, comprised of Jason Wang Shengen, Alan Zhao Chenxi, Samuel Hu Enze, David Cai Dawei, and

Chen Haoyu. They were followed by the M-Factor team of Alex Park, Clayton Izuka, Joshua Abragen, Kennedy Izuka, Enrico Del Rosario, Oliver Lee, Rintaro Miyawaki, Tania Tan, and Malika Miyawaki, who also completed 23 laps in 2:57:36. Rounding out 3<sup>rd</sup> place with 22 laps in 2:54:58 was Team TASI, Tamio Nishikido, Taro Goto, Takeshi Takano, Hiroyuki Maeda, Sakiko Eda, Haruya Eda, Taro Kubo, Masaki Narita, and Maki Narita.

Other competing teams were finishing in descending order were Charisou and SALTY'S, Agape Boyc C. Team, Agape Boys B Team, Fishing Tackle, Sato-Sekiguchi, Tsunami Sprinters, Tiffeny's Swan Song, SHARK, Team HORIPRO A, TAKEDA, Agape Girls A Team, Tsunami Rurtles, Team Inouse, HIMAWARI BADMINTON CLUB, Team Takeda, and Ganbare Nippon.

The top five teams won cash prizes and products from Goods for Running from Phiten. Among the 127 runners were 11 Japanese celebrities, and the race was filmed by for a 75-minutes special that will air on July 2, 2016, on nationwide network TV Tokyo. The participating celebrities were: Goro Noguchi (singer/ NMI Tourism Ambassador), Nobuhiro Takeda (former Japan National team professional football player), Yusuke Inoue (comedian), The TOUCH (Kazuya and Takuya, twins comedians), Maya and Saya Kimura (former Japan National Synchronized Swimming team member), Nozomi Tachibana (actress and Miss Saipan 2014), Mariya Nagao (actress and former member of AKB48), Tatsunori Fuse (singer/entertainer) and Mac Suzuki (former professional baseball pitcher).

“Ekiden is a popular sport in Japan, and we hope to attract more international teams next year,” said Concepcion. “Our Community Projects Division team has done a great job with this inaugural event, and we especially thank the community and all our sponsors who joined this year’s kick-off.”

The event was also supported by Horipro and NMI Tourism Ambassador Chiaki Nagumo, who helped bringing the event to Saipan along with the celebrities from Japan. Event volunteers included Saipan Awadori, Pacific Islands Club Saipan, Kanoa Resort, Fiesta Resort & Spa, Best Sunshine International, and Marianas Health Services.



The Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race drew 19 local and international teams on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



Ryu Tanzawa of Charisou and SALTY's passes off to Joel Fruit at the transition point of the Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



TV Tokyo filmed celebrities and other participants of the Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands, for a 75-minute special that will air on July 2, 2016.



The Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race attracted 127 local and international participants on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



Runners from Agape Christian School head north during the Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race through Garapan on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



Josua Abragen of winning team M-Factor gets a high-five from Saipan-da as Saipan Awadori members cheer on runners during the Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



The Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race passed on the western lagoon of Saipan during and after sunset on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



TV Tokyo filmed celebrities and other participants of the Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands, for a 75-minute special that will air on July 2, 2016.



Twin comedians Kazuya and Takuya of The Touch, center, and 10 other Japanese celebrities joined the Saipan Tropical Ekiden relay race on June 4, 2016, in the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are a chain of idyllic islands in the West Pacific, offering a friendly, fun and exciting vacation in paradise. They are an excellent destination for families, adventure and sports-minded travelers, as well as business people looking for a tropical haven. Adventurous travelers from Asia, Australia, Europe and elsewhere looking for new travel discoveries will find them in the Mariana Islands, just three hours travel from most cities in Japan, and four from Asia and Australia. The Northern Marianas are served from Tokyo and Osaka in Japan by Delta and Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana provides direct daily flights from Seoul and Busan and Jeju Air provides daily service from Seoul. From China, direct flight service from Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, to Saipan is available. United Airlines has daily flight connections from nine cities in Japan to Saipan with one stop. United States mainland connections can be made by Delta Air Lines to Saipan via Tokyo Narita, and United Airlines via Guam. Russian and Taiwanese visitors usually arrive via Seoul. For more information, visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).

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