

Japan celebrates its National Day with Barbadians

It is my great pleasure to greet the people of Barbados on the occasion of the National Day of Japan, the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. Emperor Naruhito was born on February 23, 1960, and was enthroned as the 126th Emperor of Japan on October 22, 2019. At his Enthronement Ceremony in Tokyo, we had the great honour of hosting Her Excellency Dame Sandra Prunella Mason, the Governor General of Barbados.

The Emperor's birthday has been celebrated every year, not only domestically but also abroad at official receptions, held by the Japanese diplomatic missions. This year, however, we had to make a difficult decision to cancel the reception due to the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the reason why I, in the capacity of the Japanese Ambassador to Barbados, celebrate this day with Barbadians in this form.

Japan and Barbados have been nurturing amicable ties since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1967. In recent years, we have been focusing on areas of culture, sports and interpersonal exchanges between our two countries. In this way we are able to create better understanding and closer relations with each other. It is encouraging that more and more Barbadians have been travelling to Japan, including a number of young participants in the National Scholarship Program and the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program.

With regard to the pandemic, both Japan and Barbados are now facing unprecedented challenges and are trying very hard to contain the spread of the virus. It is widely recognized that the Government of Barbados, under the outstanding leadership of the Prime Minister, The Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, has been doing an excellent job to keep people safe and healthy. Wishing to join this endeavour, last year Japan gave financial assistance to support the activities of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), in its Covid-19 response in Barbados, through the Japan Special Fund within the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Concurrently, we should not forget the need for continued cooperation in other fields such as business and climate change. This is especially necessary when we think about the post-pandemic economic recovery. With this in mind, Japan has recently contributed financially to the following support programs for Barbados.

- Capacity building for the recommendation of the "Industrial Heritage of Barbados" to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List through the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust.
- Empowerment of women and youth in the agriculture, fisheries and related small business sectors through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security.
- Improvement of coastal zone management and research for sustainable climate resilience of Barbados through the IDB Japan Special Fund.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games were postponed to this year. Japan is determined to give its best efforts to make the games successful as proof that the world can overcome the pandemic. We are eager to welcome the Barbadian athletes to Tokyo and host them with the most cordial hospitality.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere hope that Japan and Barbados will continue to strengthen the long-lasting friendly relations. To this end, I remain grateful for the cooperation and support rendered by the People and Government of this beautiful island.

Let's stay safe !

SHINADA Teruhiko
Ambassador of Japan to Barbados