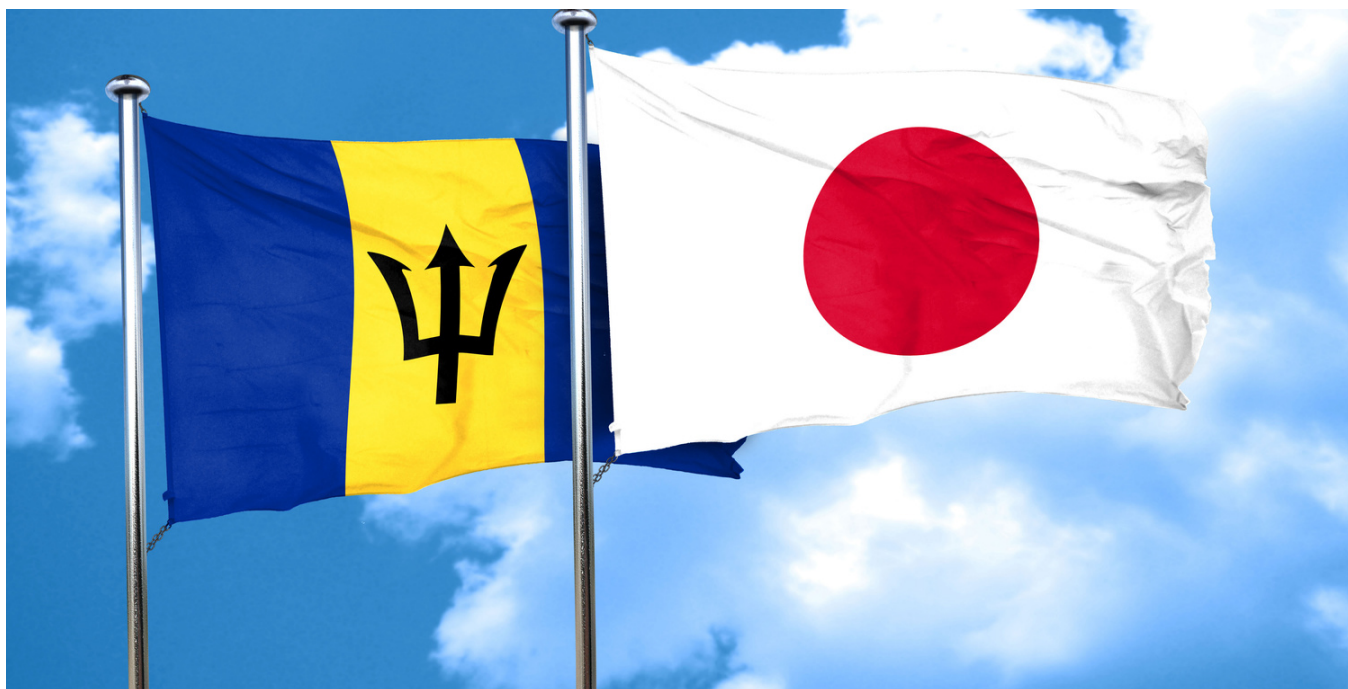




Year in Review

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN BARBADOS



Message from the Ambassador



This year marked the 56th anniversary of Japan-Barbados diplomatic relations and 2023 has proven to be a momentous year for the friendship between Japan and Barbados. As the year draws to a close, we celebrate and reflect on the enriching people-to-people exchanges and transformative collaborations that have defined these months. The heightened collaboration in addressing climate change, the bridging of cultural gaps through cultural exchanges and the record increase in high-level ministerial visits and meetings all attest to the ongoing deepening of our two states' longstanding friendship.

Kayoko Fukushima

Ambassador H.E. Ms. Kayoko FUKUSHIMA



A historic Year

The friendship between Japan and Barbados truly knows no distance, as 2023 was marked by a substantial increase in the high-level ministerial visits and exchanges between the two island states, including a historic visit by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. HAYASHI Yoshimasa.

On May 01, 2023, then Minister HAYASHI visited Barbados, becoming the first Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan to do so. Following a welcome dinner by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Mia Mottley, Minister HAYASHI paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Mottley and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Hon. Kerrie Symmonds on May 02.



L-R The then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Hayashi with Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon. Mia Mottley.

During each meeting, Minister HAYASHI reaffirmed Japan's unwavering commitment to provide much-needed assistance in various areas such as the environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction, areas of pressing concern for small island states like Barbados. During his short visit to the island, Minister HAYASHI also hosted a special luncheon for people residing in Barbados who actively foster cross-cultural exchange between the two states.



L-R Minister of Foreign Affairs' of Barbados, the Hon. Kerrie Symmonds and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Hayashi.

Just one month later, while attending the "Summit for a New Global Financing Pact" in Paris, Minister HAYASHI and Prime Minister Mottley reunited and held informal talks. This trend in the intensification of bilateral meetings continued after the appointment of the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Ms. KAMIKAWA Yoko, who in September, met with Prime Minister Mottley in New York while attending the United Nations General Assembly.



L-R Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Ms. KAMIKAWA and Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon. Mia Mottley.



Throughout the year, visits and exchanges between Barbadian ministers, officials and policymakers only increased. In August, Mr. Haseley Straugh, Digital Development Coordinator of the Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology in Barbados, participated in a training course provided by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on "Capacity Building in International Law and Policy Formation for Enhancement of Measures to Ensure Cybersecurity" in Japan. Then in November, a Barbadian delegation led by the Hon. Kirk Humphrey, Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs visited Japan, through the Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC) invitation programme, to observe Japan's advances in welfare services including elder care as both nations consist of aging populations. The delegation toured the state-of-the-art facility of the National Center for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Saitama Prefecture among other facilities that provide care for Japan's most vulnerable citizens. During his visit, Minister Humphrey paid a courtesy call to the then State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. HORII Iwao and State Minister for Health, Labour and Welfare, Mr. MIYAZAKI, Masahisa.



L-R Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs, the Hon. Kirk Humphrey with Mr. HORII Iwao, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Photo credit: APIC Invitation Programme

Bridging Culture Gaps

Soca Captivates Audiences in Japan

Music has always transcended cultural boundaries and that is profoundly evident as scores of Japanese audiences continue to embrace soca music. As recounted in the October 13th publication of the Nation News Barbados, Barbadian soca artiste, Fadda Fox, performed several of his hit songs to receptive crowds across Japan. His participation in "Japan Carnival Weekend" showcases the growing demand for Barbadian Soca music among Japanese audiences. In his interview, the artiste spoke fondly of his trip to Japan where he also enjoyed sightseeing, visiting Shibuya Crossing and Shibuya Square, famous tourist attractions in Tokyo.¹

Learning about Japan Through Books



L-R Professor Landis of the University of West Indies, Cave Hill Campus with Ambassador H.E Ms. Fukushima.

Photo Credit: Mr. Kemar Holder - Barbados Today

Courtesy of the Read Japan Project, 35 books on Japan were added to the shelves of the Sidney Martin Library of the University of the West Indies Cave Hill campus. This generous donation provides students the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of Japan and aims to help dismantle cross-cultural barriers.



Barbadian JETs take off!



Ambassador H.E. Ms. Fukushima and First Secretary Dr. Sakai (left) with Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme 2023 cohort.

Ambassador H.E. Ms. Fukushima welcomed successful Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program applicants into her residence before their journey to Japan. Annually, the JET Programme offers eligible Barbadian citizens the extraordinary opportunity to work as Assistant Language Teachers in Japan. Ambassador Fukushima shared heartening words, encouraging the new cohort to immerse themselves in the wonder of Japanese culture while introducing their students, coworkers and neighbours to the warm and rich culture of Barbados.

While the 2023 JET cohort was starting a new chapter in Japan, scores of enthusiastic Barbadians gathered virtually to explore becoming a JET. The Embassy of Japan in Barbados held an informative series of JET Q&As in September and October, bringing together JET alumni and JET hopefuls in an interactive exchange on living and working as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan. Attendees avidly engaged in learning more about Japanese people, culture, and lifestyles; the conversations covering everything from advice on learning Japanese to finding the best barber shops in Japan!

Read more about the JET programme on our website.

One Fold at a Time

In June, the Embassy of Japan in Barbados hosted a colorful origami workshop, teaching Barbadians the ancient Japanese art of paper folding. By the end of the session delighted participations showed off their colorful creations and a new skill. This scene of attendees diligently crafting their first origami piece with Japanese staff is a poignant reminder that sometimes cultural gaps can be bridged one fold at a time.



Embassy staff with Origami Workshop Participants at the Ross University School of Medicine in Barbados.

Photo credit: The Department of Clinical Foundations, Ross University School of Medicine

An Opportunity of a Lifetime

Each year the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan offers eligible Barbadians the opportunity to receive a lifechanging scholarship to pursue their graduate studies in Japan. The MEXT scholarship affords successful applicants a round-trip ticket, tuition and living expenses for the duration of their studies in Japan. This scholarship opportunity seeks to foster the next generation of scholars that will advance the development of both nations. (Read more about the MEXT scholarship on our website.) With the cooperation of APIC, students from The University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave



Hill Campus are provided with the opportunity to pursue studies at Sophia University's Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies in Tokyo. This remarkable collaboration provides students an extraordinary opportunity to deepen their understanding of Japan while enhancing academic research in areas of acute concern for the two island states such as environmental conservation.

Strengthening Diplomatic Ties

Embassy of Japan Celebrates 7 Years in Barbados

Since its establishment in 2016, the Embassy of Japan in Barbados has continued to play an active role in the Barbadian community. The Embassy of Japan's second resident Ambassador, H.E. Ms. Fukushima, has become a familiar face at forums, schools and cultural events across the island, engaging at both ministerial and grassroots levels to champion climate action, environmental preservation, education, youth and elder empowerment.



L-R Ambassador H.E. Ms. Fukushima with Senator Dr. The Honourable Shantal M. Munro-Knight, Minister with the responsibility for Culture in the Prime Minister's Office.



L-R Ambassador H.E. Ms. Fukushima with Prime Minister of Barbados the Hon. Mia Mottley

Photo credit: Office of the Prime Minister, Barbados

A friend of Barbados

Japan has repeatedly linked arms with multilateral organizations to aid Barbados in combating climate change and managing its effects. In October, Japan pledged up to 1 billion USD to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) during its second funding round, matching its donation from the prior year. According to the GCF, the climate fund presently finances six projects in Barbados with a total CGF financing of 151.5 million dollars. These climate projects are aimed at renewable energy transition and mobilizing financing for climate resilience.² Similarly, Japan, in partnership with the UNDP, offered a grant of \$12.5 million USD to fund "The Project For Strengthening Sargassum Management Capacities in the Caribbean". Japan also supports Barbados in coastal zone management through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In concert with its local diplomatic mission, JICA, APIC and the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), Japan has played a pivotal role in deploying Japanese disaster management advisors including dispatching JICA experts to Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), providing training to ministerial staff and key stakeholders and



facilitating visits to enhance the economic, technological, and social welfare development of Barbados.

Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2024

This intensification of the relationship between Barbados and Japan is reflective of the deepening of the broader Japan-Caricom friendship. Next year will mark 30 years since the first Japan-Caricom Consultation in 1993 and fittingly, 2024 has been designated as the "Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2024". This will be the second Japan-Caricom Friendship Year commemorated as 2014 was also dedicated to celebrating and consolidating the ties between Japan and the region.



Official Logo for Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2024

Over the years, Japan has been an all-weather friend and dedicated partner in the region's development. High-level ministerial meetings, facilitated through a series of Japan-Caricom Ministerial Meetings, have continued to be held, building on the strong foundation of Japan and Caricom's common values of democracy and cooperation and

common interest in the preservation of marine environment, enforcement of international marine law and disaster reduction risk. Notable milestones such as the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo's visit to the region in 2014, the then Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu's visit to Jamaica in 2021 and the then Foreign Minister HAYASHI's visit to Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados in 2023 underscore the significance Japan places on this ever-deepening friendship. Through Japan's diplomatic missions, companies, and organizations such as JICA and in collaboration with multilateral organizations such as UN, IDB and GCF, Japan has continued to contribute to the region across various domains including education, technology transfer, disaster management and economic development. Indeed, there is much to celebrate in the Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2024!

Cheers to 2024!

The numerous milestones attained over the past year fill us with eagerness to continue strengthening the friendship between Japan, Barbados and the wider Caricom region. Anchored in common values and fueled by the shared commitment to preserve our environment and achieve sustainable development, we enthusiastically anticipate the coming year. The Embassy of Japan in Barbados expresses sincere gratitude for the cooperation of the Barbadian people and extends heartfelt wishes for a prosperous 2024 to the citizens of this beautiful nation. We look forward to celebrating with you all the Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2024!

Notes

1. Sealy, Donna. "Fadda Fox Pushes Soca, Crop Over in Japan." Nation News. October 13, 2023.
2. Green Climate Fund-Barbados Retrieved from <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/barbados> 11/01/2023

Cover Image: Argus - stock.adobe.com