



Ocean Breeze

FROM THE PACIFIC TO THE CARIBBEAN SEA

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN BARBADOS



BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

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In this issue of our newsletter, we discuss how Japan has been sharing its experience with disasters to build resilient communities in Barbados and around the world. On page 8, we catch up with Nikita, a Barbadian student studying environmental sustainability in Tokyo.



Build Back Better

BUILD BACK BETTER

Among Japan and Barbados' numerous similarities, the two nations also share an acute vulnerability to natural disasters. Japan is situated in the Asia-Pacific region and is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards. The combination of Japan's location, climate and topography makes it prone to a range of disasters, including typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and other coastal hazards.

Such familiarity with disasters has led Japan to develop a comprehensive and progressive disaster prevention and risk reduction approaches. This multipronged system integrates artificial and eco-based solutions to disaster risk management (DRM), gender-inclusive approaches, state of art technology, disaster awareness and nation-wide training in a commitment to prevent disaster and in the event of disaster, reduce the loss of lives, livelihoods and assets.

Japan has continued the Build Back Better approach which seeks to mainstream resilience into post-disaster recovery, focusing efforts on not merely rebuilding to pre-disaster states but leveraging technology and innovation to make infrastructure and communities stronger and more resilient to future disasters.

JAPANESE INNOVATIONS



Japanese construction firm Shimizu Corp has developed a swing mass damper (SMD) which can be installed on roofs to control multi-directional shaking caused by earthquakes.



Shigeru Ban Architect developed paper partitions systems composed of paper tubes and canvas curtains to divide spaces in emergency shelters and provide displaced individuals with their own quarters.



WOTA Corp's "WOTA BOX", is a portable device that enables automated water treatment, designed to enable continual water access even when water and sewer infrastructure are compromised due to a disaster.



BUILD BACK BETTER IN ACTION: FUKUSHIMA'S TRANSFORMATION

When a 9.1 earthquake shook Japan in March 2011, it not only triggered a tsunami but also disabled the cooling systems at three nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, triggering the hazardous release of radioactive materials into the atmosphere. Despite the unparalleled damage caused by this triple disaster, Fukushima prefecture now stands as thriving region whose recovery is a testament of the build back better ethos. **Scan the QR code below to watch a quick video on Fukushima's remarkable transformation.**



A Resilient Barbados

BUILDING A RESILIENT BARBADOS

In concert with multilateral institutions including the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Universal Postal Union (UPU) and Japanese organizations such as Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan has provided holistic support to Barbados' resilience efforts, including funding the **"Advancement of the Regional Multi-Hazard Early Warning System Programme for Enhanced Disaster Management in CDEMA Participating States"**.



Participants of site visit during UPU workshop funded by the Japan Fund held in May, 2024



DONATION OF EQUIPMENT

As part of a US\$900,000 grant aid to enhance the island's disaster preparedness, Japan donated much needed equipment to Department of Emergency Management (DEM) in 2018. The items included disaster response vehicles, emergency vehicles, tents, tarpaulin sheets, waterproof footwear, megaphones, lighting apparatus and generators



STRENGTHENING CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING IN JAPAN

A host of CARICOM stakeholders from the public and private sector are routinely provided the opportunity to engage in training in Japan. To strengthen Barbados' capacity, Japan has provided several training programmes through JICA's Knowledge Co-Creation Programme (KCCP) including **"Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Strategy for Resilient Societies to Natural Disaster"**

NEWS

Japan Provides Assistance After Hurricane Beryl

In the wake of the trail of devastation left by Hurricane Beryl, Ms. KAMIKAWA Yoko, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, sent messages to H.E. Senator the Hon. Keisal Melissa Peters, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and H.E. the Hon. Joseph Andall, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development of Grenada, expressing her heartfelt condolences to the Governments and people of both countries. In a swift response to the countries' requests, the Government of Japan provided emergency relief goods (tents, sleeping pads, portable jerry cans, etc.) through JICA to support recovery efforts in Jamaica, St. Vincent and Grenadines and Grenada.

JETs Take off!

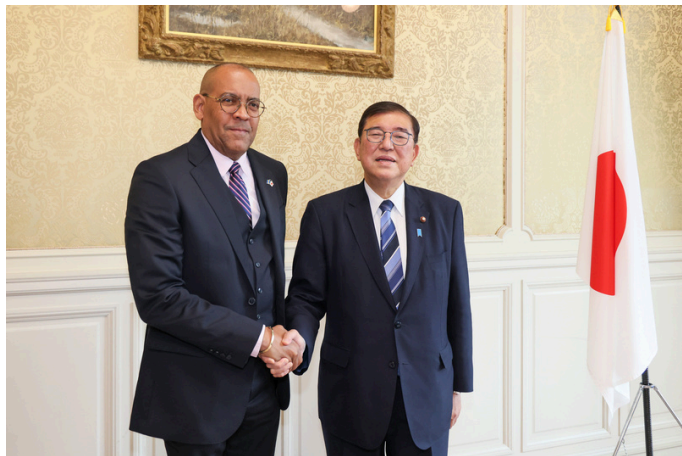


L-R Second Secretary, Mr. Hideichiro NAKAMURA, Mr. Matthew Smith, the then Ambassador of Japan, Ms. FUKUSHIMA, Ms. Rachel Reid, JET alumna, Ms. Carla Gaskin and First Secretary, Mr. Shitau MIURA,

On July 04, the then Ambassador of Japan, Kayoko Fukushima, hosted a farewell dinner at her official residence in honour of last year's JET participants. Participants in the JET Programme are assigned to public schools or local boards of education as Assistant Language Teachers in Japan.



CARICOM Officials Meet in Tokyo for the 8th Japan-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting



L-R: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, the Hon. Kerrie D. Symmonds, and Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Ishiba Shigeru.

From December 12 to 15, 2024, a Barbadian delegation led by the Honourable Kerrie D. Symmonds, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, visited Japan to attend the Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference. Following this meeting **"The Project for Industrial Development and Technology Transfer in the Member States of the Caribbean Community"**, a Japan-funded grant aid project in partnership with UNIDO, was signed. This 730-million-yen initiative will provide equipment, technical cooperation, and training to CARICOM countries, focusing on water, agribusiness, and industrial diversification and aims to aid CARICOM's sustainable development



The Signing Ceremony. Photo credit – Cabinet Public Affairs Office of Japan
Source: www.caricom.org

Barbadians Head to Japan for Graduate School

Along with last year's JET cohort, two Barbadian students travelled to Japan to pursue their graduate studies. Ms. Asha Gittens, graduate of the University of the West Indies Cavehill Campus, met with Ambassador Fukushima before travelling to Japan to attend Sophia University's Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies. This program aims to foster the next generation of scholars to enhance the region's sustainable development through education. Additionally, this year's MEXT scholar, Ms. Nyesha Bridgeman also journeyed to Japan to begin her graduate studies.



L-R Second Secretary Hideichiro NAKAMURA, Ms. Nyesha Bridgeman and the then Ambassador FUKUSHIMA



L-R Ms. Asha Gittens speaking with Ambassador FUKUSHIMA



Meet Matsumura

EMBARKING ON A NEW VOYAGE TO THE CARIBBEAN



Naoki Matsumura
Regional Policy Advisor for Disaster Risk Reduction
JICA Expert on Comprehensive Disaster Risk
Management for CDEMA

Hello Barbados!

My name is Naoki Matsumura. I arrived in Barbados in August, 2024 to assume the position of JICA Regional Policy Advisor for Disaster Risk Reduction for the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). I have been working in disaster risk reduction and water-related fields for more than 20 years. I was born and raised in Shiga Prefecture, which has the largest lake "Biwa-lake" in Japan and is prone to many water-related problems such as floods, landslides, water shortage and environmental problems, as such I grew up interested in disasters and water issues. My interest in disaster risk management was further fueled by the frequent earthquakes we experience and the fact that my father was an architect engineer.

After studying sociology, anthropology and international cooperation at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, I went to Bangladesh as a visiting researcher at Dhaka University. There, I encountered problems with drinking water (arsenic contamination) and tropical storms (cyclones), which led me to work in water and disaster risk management at a grassroots level through a Japanese NGO. In 2009, I started my career at JICA where I would later be dispatched to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief in Bangladesh, as a JICA policy formulation and coordination advisor from 2015 to 2022.

In 2022, I returned to Japan and served as a Special Advisor in Disaster Risk Reduction Group, Global Environment Department at JICA HQs, where I was involved in promoting initiatives to achieve the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR) at various international conferences.

During my tenure in JICA HQs, I had a chance to participate in the 15th CDEMA Technically Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting held in Trinidad & Tobago in April, 2024 and the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Antigua & Barbuda in May, 2024, where I got acquainted with many stakeholders in the Caribbean region. I was also able to speak with Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon. Mia Mottley and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Hon. Kerrie Symmonds on that occasion.

I believe that such extensive experience in Japan and South Asia, which share many common vulnerabilities with the region, will be useful in my role with CDEMA. In particular, as the amount of damage caused by hurricanes and other disasters in the region can sometimes exceed a country's GDP, I believe that not only strengthening post-disaster response and recovery capacity is critical but also preparing in advance, pre-disaster investment and taking structural measures to reduce risks will become extremely important for the future in the Caribbean region.

As a new CDEMA family member, I would like to contribute to disaster-related capacity building and promote disaster risk reduction efforts in the countries together with CDEMA's "powerful" crew. Additionally, as some of the CDEMA crew have participated in JICA training programmes in Japan, I hope that we can be a bridge between Japan and the Caribbean region.

Also, I am looking forward to enjoying life in Barbados and working hard to contribute to reducing disaster risk so that we can keep this wonderful natural environment as good as possible for as long as possible.



Events Recap



Japan Festival - "Matsuri"

On October 12-13, 2024, the Embassy of Japan, in partnership with Fujitsu Caribbean Ltd, Nassco Ltd., and in cooperation with Wine World Inc., held the inaugural Japan Festival "Matsuri". The weekend of festivities provided 510 attendees the opportunity to experience Japanese culture, products and innovations. The event featured a variety of cultural workshops, information booths, a live karate demonstration and an introductory performance of the Okinawan traditional dance "Eisa".

Japanese Film Festival

From October 18 to November 7, 2024, the Embassy organized a Japanese Film Festival, the first of its kind in Barbados. Scores of Barbadians gathered at the Olympus Theatre, Barbados Community College, University of the West Indies and Barbados Museum and Historical Society to enjoy screenings of classic and contemporary Japanese films.



Judo x Social Inclusion

On November 14, 2024, the Embassy of Japan and the Japan Foundation, in association with Barbados Olympic Association and the Barbados Judo Association, held a special event under the theme of "Judo x Social Inclusion". Scores of sports enthusiasts and inclusion advocates gathered at the Marine Gardens Dojo for an interactive demonstration and panel discussion led by visiting Olympic gold medalist Mr. Keiji Suzuki and renowned Paralympian Mr. Yusuke Hatsuse.



Events Recap

Japanese Language Workshop

Ms. Asahi Kunito, a Japanese education specialist from the Japan Foundation, visited Barbados from 26 to 29 December. During her visit she led Japanese learning workshops for Japanese Language students at BCC and students of the Japanese culture and linguistic program at the Christ Church Foundation Secondary School



Farewell Reception

Ambassador Fukushima held a farewell reception to express her thanks to her partners and friends. Government officials, representatives of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, members of the academia as well as guests from the private sector gathered to bid her farewell. In her remarks, the then Ambassador Fukushima reflected on the numerous achievements during her tenure and expressed her sincere thanks to government and people of Barbados for their support.

Visit our website to read her farewell message.

Caribbean Drone Symposium

On February 10, First Secretary, Miura delivered Ambassador's remarks at the inaugural Caribbean Drone Symposium organized by the UNDP and UWI's Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies. His remarks highlighted the pivotal role of drone technology in "The project for improving National Sargassum Management Capacities in the Caribbean". This \$12.3 million initiative, funded by the Government of Japan, aims to address sargassum-related challenges in Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.





Events Recap



Post Card Exchange

On February 25, 2025, we organized a post card activity where students in Nanyo City*, Japan and students at Deacons Primary School in Barbados exchanged postcards created using recycled materials. The students drew postcards' design based on each country's culture. While enjoying the exercise, they also got the opportunity to learn about each country's culture.

*Nanyo City and Barbados continue to share a strong bond since Nanyo city has facilitated numerous exchanges including hosting Team Barbados during the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Signing Ceremony

On March 07, the Embassy of Japan in Barbados held a signing ceremony to launch "The Project for the Renovating of a Homeless and Emergency Shelter". This project, funded through Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Projects (GGP) program and implemented by the Barbados Alliance to End Homelessness (BAEH), seeks to tackle the growing issue of homelessness among women and children, particularly those most vulnerable in the event of disasters.



Emperor's Reception

On March 21, Ambassador Miyasaka, hosted a reception in celebration of the birthday of His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan, at his residence. The reception was attended by over 100 attendees, including Her Excellency The Most Honourable Dame Sandra Prunella Mason, President of Barbados, the Honourable Miss Santia Bradshaw, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Sandra Husbands, Minister of Training and Tertiary Education, Government officials, heads of the Diplomatic corps, honorary Consular corps, as well as guests from the private sector



Bajans in Japan

Bajans in Japan



Studying Sustainability in Tokyo

Meet Nikita



Nikita Kunar, Sophia-APIC-UWI Exchange Programme Scholar

My name is Nikita Kunar, and I am proud to be from the beautiful island of Barbados. I am currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Global Environmental Studies at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan. This incredible opportunity became a reality thanks to the Sophia-APIC-UWI programme scholarship. As I continue my studies, this programme not only deepens my knowledge of global environmental issues but also enriches my understanding of diverse cultural perspectives. The skills I am gaining in working with people from various backgrounds are invaluable as I navigate my path towards working within the field of sustainability in the future.

One Year Later

Since arriving in Japan in September 2023, I have embraced every experience with an open mind. I live in Setagaya City, Tokyo, in a neighborhood that feels surprisingly familiar—quiet, convenient, and surrounded by nature. The local trees and flowers inspire me daily, with their changing colors throughout the seasons, resembling living works of art. Another seasonal change is the variety of Japanese foods and treats. Trying new foods has become one of my favorite activities!

Day in the life

As a master's student on the Thesis Track, I spend most of my days on campus and in the library. My passion for knowledge and dedication to my thesis topic often keeps me in the library until closing. I try to balance this with exploring Japan and learning more about the culture, language and people.

Learning a New Language

Before arriving in Japan, my proficiency in the Japanese language was very limited, as learning new languages has never been my strong suit. However, this has not significantly affected my experience, thanks to being able to use my phone for translation! Over time, my listening and comprehension of Japanese have greatly improved. While I am far from fluent, I've learned many phrases necessary for daily interactions. Thankfully, I have support from the APIC staff and the staff at my dorm, who have been very helpful. Additionally, sometimes there are translation devices available in places like the post office and train stations that make communication easier. While it's always a plus to know the language of the country you live in, don't let the language barrier stop you from taking a trip or pursuing an opportunity in Japan.

Bajans in Japan

My favorite Memory

One of my most memorable experiences in Japan was visiting the Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History & Human History. As someone deeply passionate about learning, I could have spent days exploring the exhibits. Seeing dinosaur fossils and learning about different eras of Japanese history were unforgettable experiences. Another highlight was attending the Sawara Grand Festival, where I marveled at the craftsmanship of the giant floats and enjoyed the traditional music. I also found great joy in visiting Atami, where the breathtaking landscape left me in awe, and at Team Labs in Tokyo, I was immersed in the beauty of the floating flower garden. My time in Japan has been filled with so many wonderful experiences that it's hard to pick just a few to share.



Team Labs (Tokyo) - This art facility utilizes digital technology to create an immersive experience.

Something for Everyone

Japan offers a unique experience for everyone, and I encourage anyone visiting to let their interests and passions guide them, all while keeping an open mind. The Sophia-APIC-UWI Programme is a fantastic opportunity for those passionate about the environment and sustainability. If that resonates with you, this program could be the key to unlocking your future career goals.

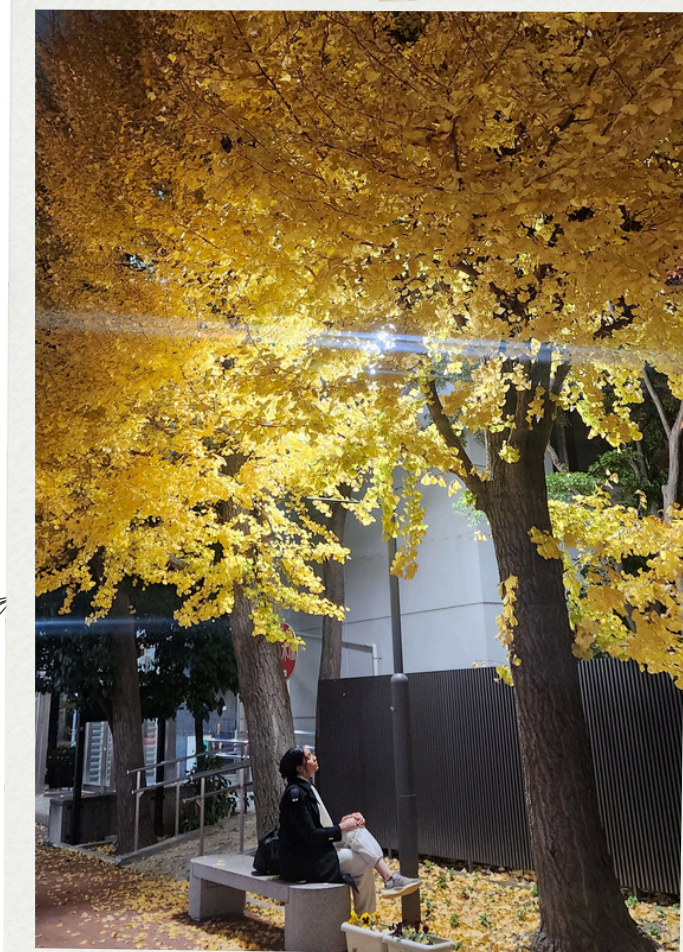


Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History & Human one of the largest museums in Western Japan.

Bajans in Japan



Monkeying around in Tokyo!



I love watching the season's change



Sawara Grand Festival (Chiba Prefecture)

This centuries old float festival takes place not once but twice a year! The festival has even been recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Witnessing this event is truly one of my favourite memories.



Atami, Japan

