

Japan-T&T Relations: Strengthening 60 years of friendship

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HAYASHI Yoshimasa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan



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It is my great pleasure to be the first Japanese Foreign Minister to visit the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, while marking a new chapter in the relations between the two countries. Trinidad and Tobago is well-known to Japanese music lovers, including myself, for its world-famous Carnival, and as the birthplace of steelpan as well as soca and calypso music.

Although geographically distant, our two countries are both maritime nations surrounded by oceans, and are important partners who share values and principles. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1964, we have consistently had good relations. In particular, Japan has closely cooperated with Trinidad and Tobago — one of the leading countries of the Caribbean Community (Caricom), which is a major group in the international arena — within the framework of the United Nations, and in areas such as disaster management and climate change.

In 2014, Trinidad and Tobago was the first Caribbean country visited by a Prime Minister of Japan, then Prime Minister ABE Shinzo, who marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Trinidad and Tobago. On that occasion, the historic "Japan-Caricom Summit" was held for the first time in Port-of-Spain. At the Summit, Japan announced its three pillars of cooperation with the Caricom, which remain to this day: (1) Cooperation to overcome the vulnerabilities particular to small island states; (2) Deepening exchanges; and (3) Cooperation in the international arena.

Japan and Caribbean countries are island states and thus face the common challenge of being prone to natural disasters. We recognise that Caribbean countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, experience development challenges and difficulties particular to island states, in spite of the high per capita income. In order to overcome the unique vulnerabilities of these island states, Japan has been providing specific assistance corresponding to each country's circumstances in accordance with the abovementioned three pillars.

In recent years, Japan has undertaken initiatives with Trinidad and Tobago to address the vulnerabilities particular to island states, such as climate change and environmental issues. These initiatives include assisting in the removal of the Sargassum seaweed, which damages the beautiful landscape and marine environment of Trinidad and Tobago and adversely affects the two important industries

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Ajay Balkissoon holds a large bundle of University of Tri Tobago's Eastern Institute of Agri Forestry Campus Centeno.



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of tourism and fishery in the country; as well as strengthening the healthcare system in light of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to continue to actively provide cooperation based on the three pillars with an approach unique to Japan.

Views on the renovation process.

Trade and investment are key to sustainable development. Japanese companies are participating and contributing in sectors such as energy and power, which are conducive to the basic infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago. I look forward to strengthening our economic ties with the twin island Republic, as one of the leading energy suppliers in the region.

The relationship between Japan and Trinidad and Tobago has deepened significantly over the past decade. Next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and Japan will be strengthening exchanges with Trinidad and Tobago and other Caricom countries by designating the year as "Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2024." Specifically, in preparation for the 60th anniversary, the Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, will facilitate discussions to further expand and strengthen bilateral relations through the Joint Task Force established last year.


The best embodiment of friendship is people-to-people exchange. The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which invites foreign nationals to Japan to teach English, plays an important role in enhancing mutual understanding between Japan and other countries. The participants from Trinidad and Tobago, of which 66 are currently in Japan, have taught English to young students across the country. These Trinbagonians serve as a bridge between the two countries, for which I would like to express my gratitude.












Additionally, there are many people in Trinidad and Tobago who are familiar with Japanese anime, manga, and Budo (martial arts) such as judo, karate and kendo, and some are also studying the Japanese language. Next week, from Friday May 12th to Monday 15th, 2023, the Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago will be hosting a cultural programme of Japanese traditional 'Jiutamai' dance performances and workshops in collaboration with and performed at the Academy for the Performing Arts (APA), the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA) Campus; the Centre for Language Learning (CLL), The University of the West Indies (UWI), St Augustine Campus; and the National Library and Information Systems Authority (NALIS) Port of Spain Library. I hope to see many citizens visiting these events and experiencing this unique aspect of Japanese culture. During 2024's Year of Exchange, joint cultural events between Japan and Trinidad and Tobago are expected to be held, along with other featured Japanese cultural events.

The Caribbean countries are friends and sincerely trusted partners with whom Japan has shared a long history. Today, when the very foundations of international order are under threat, I believe that Japan and Trinidad and Tobago are partners that cooperate in various ways to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law. Building upon the 60 years of progress in our relations, it is my sincere hope to see the further development and solidarity of our two countries next year, as we approach the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Trinidad and Tobago.

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