

## National Day Reception 2013

December 9, 2013

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The Celebration of the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan was held on December 9, 2013 at the Japanese Ambassador's residence. His Excellency Yoshimasa Tezuka hosted this reception which was attended by approximately 290 guests, including Dr. the Honourable Roodal Moonilal, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Housing and Urban Development, The Honourable Chief Justice Ivor Archie, Dr. the Honourable Lincoln Douglas, Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education, Senator the Honourable Kevin Ramnarine, Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, The Honourable Raziah Ahmed, Minister in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Major General Kenrick Maharaj, Chief of Defense Staff, His Worship the Mayor Alderman Raymond Tim Kee, Mayor of Port of Spain, Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, and Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, Member of Parliament for La Brea.

The reception commenced with the anthems of both Trinidad and Tobago and Japan, which was followed by an opening remark by Ambassador Tezuka. In his remark, Ambassador Tezuka highlighted the Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2014, outlining some remarkable bilateral issues in the areas of economy and culture. He also expressed his hope to further strengthen bilateral relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Japan. This was followed by remarks by Dr. the Honourable Roodal Moonilal, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Housing and Urban Development, who mentioned recent developments between the two countries such as the recent decision by the government of Trinidad and Tobago to waive short-term visa requirements for nationals of Japan as well as the signing of a DME (dimethyl ether) project with a major Japanese company. He also announced that the proposed schedule of the upcoming Japan-CARICOM Foreign Ministers' Meeting was suitable for Trinidad and Tobago and expressed his gratitude to Japan for its support in the international fora.

The reception featured a variety of Japanese cultural presentations including the *Kagami Biraki* Ceremony, a ceremony which commemorates new beginnings and involves the breaking of a wooden cask filled with *sake* (a Japanese fermented beverage made of rice), a *Chado* (the Japanese tea ceremony) demonstration, a promotional activity of *sake*, and a small exhibition of *Bonsai* works. A demonstration of DME fuel powered vehicle was also conducted. Some guests gave us favorable comments on the programs of the reception, saying the wide variety and freshness of the programs contributed greatly to a deeper understanding on Japanese culture and promotion of investment by Japanese companies.

## STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR YOSHIMASA TEZUKA

Dr. the Honourable Roodal Moonilal, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Housing and Urban Development

The Honourable Chief Justice Ivor Archie

Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education

Dr. the Honourable Lincoln Douglas, Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism

Senator the Honourable Kevin Ramnarine, Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs

The Honourable Raziah Amend, Minister in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development

Members of Parliament

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening. It is my pleasure to be here with you today on the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. It has been a great pleasure to serve my tour of duty in Trinidad and Tobago. My time here has been filled with many auspicious occasions, such as marking 50 years of Trinidad and Tobago's independence last year, celebrating 40 years of Caricom relations with chair country Trinidad and Tobago hosting an historical event, and soon there will be the planned celebrations of Japan-Caricom Friendship Year in 2014.

I would like to also take this opportunity to convey my congratulations for two significant achievements: the first is the Honourable Mr. Justice Geoffrey Henderson's appointment as a Judge of the International Criminal Court.

The second is Mr. Jehue Gordon's gold medal performance in the 400 meter hurdle at the 2013 World Championships in Moscow. He is a very talented athlete who will surely enjoy more success in the future.

For my part, during my service here, I have found that Japan and T&T enjoy many good relations in a number of areas.

With regard to people to people exchanges, we provide technical training in essential areas. In the Eastern Caribbean region, more than 1100 persons, including 161 Trinbagonians, have participated in these programs since its inception. And in January of this year an Alumni Society was established for those who have participated in these training programs.

Cultural exchange already exists between Japan and T&T in the form of the Japan Exchange Teaching programme. So far, more than 100 persons from the Eastern Caribbean, including 80 T&T nationals, have participated.

With respect to investment, we have a major presence here as the Japanese company, Marubeni, is deeply involved in the local supply of electricity, which is a key industry that

supports many other areas. We also see many Japanese vehicles here, which are made for the same left-lane traffic systems in Japan and T&T. Just recently, one automobile manufacturer, Toyota, opened a new office in San Fernando. I would also like to note that many of these Japanese companies bring Japanese "Business Ethics" to the various countries where they have operations.

These Japanese Business Ethics are characterized by quick responses, adhering to commitments or promises, scrupulous after-sale services, and emphasizing the prosperity of employees and society as a whole. Guided by these ethics, Japanese companies seek the long-term interests of the countries in which they operate.

And now there is a further expansion of Japanese investment and business philosophy with the agreement made by Mitsubishi Gas Chemicals and Mitsubishi Corporation earlier this year for the establishment of a petro-chemical plant in T&T. I have no doubt that this will be a huge project, but there is one aspect of this project that I would like to highlight, and that is the production of dimethylether or DME, which is an environmentally friendly yet powerful fuel. Actually, some of you may have noticed a vehicle parked at the entrance of this residence. It is a DME-fuelled vehicle and all guests are welcome to view a brief demonstration this evening.

As we look ahead, I would like to note that Japan and CARICOM members continue to deepen relations, as exemplified by the convening of the 16<sup>th</sup> Japan-CARICOM Consultation Meeting in Guyana earlier this July. Next year will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and T&T, as well as Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year, and I certainly hope that we will further strengthen relations in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the Caribbean region.

I would now like to introduce you to some cultural interests: the Japanese Tea Ceremony, and bonsai. The tea ceremony and bonsai have several centuries of tradition and influence on Japanese art, architecture, as well as the spirit of the Japanese people. I hope you enjoy the demonstrations of these celebrated Japanese traditions, and I would like to express my gratitude in advance to our Tea Masters and the Bonsai Association for their presentations.

I am also pleased to announce that last Wednesday, Japan's traditional cuisine, Washoku, was added to UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, so please enjoy our Japanese food this evening.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for sharing in this evening's celebration, and I invite you to make a toast to the Government and the remarkable People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In Japan, to say cheers, we say kanpai, so I invite to say the Japanese toast...kanpai. May your nation continue to grow in prosperity.

Thank You.

