

National Day Reception Celebrating His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan's Birthday

On Friday, March 6, 2026, His Excellency Dr. Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, hosted a reception celebrating the 66th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, the 126th Emperor of Japan, at the official residence in Port of Spain. Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ms. Kiva Clarke, Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice, Senator the Honourable Professor Prakash Persad, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, and Senator the Honourable Phillip Alexander, Minister in the Ministry of Housing, attended the reception with many specially-invited guests.

In his address (see below), Ambassador Umezawa highlighted shared milestones of both countries, underscored the growing cooperation between the two nations, Trinidad and Tobago's cultural showcase at Expo 2025 in Osaka, highlighted cultural outreach initiatives, reaffirmed deeper economic collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago, and shared his personal appreciation for the beauty of Trinidad and Tobago.

On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Permanent Secretary (Ag.) of the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Ms. Kiva Clarke, extended congratulations to the Government of Japan on the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's 66th birthday. In her remarks, she reaffirmed the strong and enduring friendship between Trinidad and Tobago and Japan, highlighted Japan's economic support, cultural activities, people-to-people exchange programs, and reaffirmed Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations.

During the reception, guests enjoyed a rich showcase of Japanese culture, including sake tasting, authentic Japanese cuisine, especially grilled Japanese eel and yellow-tail sashimi, and its beautiful displays. The evening concluded in an atmosphere of friendship and celebration, reaffirming the enduring bonds between Japan and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.



His Excellency Dr Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan gives his remarks.



Ms. Kiva Clarke, Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, gives her remarks.



From left to right, Senator the Honourable Phillip Alexander, Minister in the Ministry of Housing, His Excellency Dr Akima Umezawa, Ms. Kiva Clarke, Permanent Secretary (Ag.) Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs; Senator the Honourable Professor Prakash Persad, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training and the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice.



His Excellency Dr Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan chatting with Ms. Kiva Clarke, Permanent Secretary (Ag.) Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.



Japanese Sashimi served in a traditional wooden boat.



Guests partake in Sake tasting.



Guests enjoy Japanese Cuisine.



Guests enjoy a variety of Sake.



Ambassador Umezawa, with members of the Japanese Cultural Association of Trinidad and Tobago (JCATT).



Ambassador Dr. Akima Umezawa's National Day Address

It is my great honour to commence my second National Day Reception this evening, which celebrates the 66th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito. His Majesty is the 126th Emperor of Japan, the world's longest continuous monarchy, with a succession spanning over 2,600 years.

It is also my genuine pleasure that one year has passed since my posting here in Port of Spain, in experiencing splendid events, plentiful excitement, and fruitful outcomes. My most significant experience was, as everyone shared with me, to witness the landslide victory of the UNC, United National Congress, in the national election. The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar was sworn in for a second term as Prime Minister, becoming the only woman to serve as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago on two occasions.

In a meantime, on the Japanese political scene last year, Her Excellency Sanae Takaichi was elected Japan's first female prime minister, a landmark moment for the historically conservative country in both politics and society.

I feel a strong commonality between the two nations. The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar was awarded the People's Choice winner of the Caribbean Global Leader 2025 in September, while Her Excellency Sanae Takaichi was ranked third, in the World's Most Powerful Women by Forbes in 2025. The common trait between the two female politicians is undoubtedly their strong robust leadership.

Another commonality I discovered last year is that both countries are partners for a future society. In October, the University of the West Indies formalized a Memorandum of Understanding with the Japanese company Niterra Co., Ltd. to pioneer a groundbreaking green hydrogen initiative in Trinidad and Tobago. The Japanese company identified a suitable site for its sophisticated hydrogen technology at the muscular petrochemical infrastructure of Point Lisas. For such clean hydrogen power, Toyota, the world's leading car manufacturer, has already developed the commercial basis vehicle of a hydrogen energy powerhouse, the "Mirai". The name "Mirai" means "future" in Japanese. Toyota also holds the largest market share in this country. Tonight, Toyota exhibits its state-of-the-art technology, just outside this hall, the brand name "Yaris", which features the most fuel-efficient passenger vehicle in the world.

Next, I would like to move onto the sports world. In January this year, the legendary athlete Mr Keshorn Walcott was named First Citizens Sportsman of the Year 2025. He is widely recognized as the 2012 Olympic Gold Medalist of javelin excellence. Last September, he returned to the summit of his discipline by winning the World Athletics Championships title in

Tokyo – his first global gold medal in over a decade since his Olympic victory. I'm convinced the enthusiastic support from the Japanese audience miraculously pushed his javelin flying faster and higher. It could be a synergy, and we Japanese were so delighted by the tireless spirit and astonishing strength of the Trinidadian legend.

I also would like to touch upon the World Expo Osaka 2025 held in Japan last year. The event was a significant draw for many Japanese visitors who were captivated by Trinidad and Tobago's music, parade dancing, and fashion. During the six-month Expo Osaka, the Trinidad and Tobago Pavilion attracted more than 600,000 visitors to the enjoyable cultural exhibitions, which showcased the steelpan, a TT's symbol of creativity, resilience, and national pride. On 11 August, World Steelpan Day, Japanese spectators were so impressed by the country's vibrant carnival parade. The Honourable Minister Sobers represented the government and highlighted the steelpan's leverage in promoting an inclusive society, sustainable communities, and the creative economy.

In the meantime, here in Trinidad and Tobago, numerous Japanese cultural events were held last year. In May, Japan donated over 100 books on Japanese history, economy, and literature written in English to the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago. A ladies' Japanese cultural association presented so many hands-on experiences of Japanese culture for hundreds of Trinidadians, particularly children, around the country. In August, one TT's organizer presented a two-day event of Japanese animation and cosplay at the Trincity Centre of Excellence. The event, named ALIAS Entertainment Expo, attracted more than 3,000 attendees from across Trinidad and Tobago.

So, I am delighted to work here in such a highly Japanese-friendly country. Another fascinating experience since my posting here has been to appreciate the beautiful, colourful, and cheerful birds in Trinidad and Tobago. I have enjoyed taking bird photography for around a year. I hope you can enjoy printing my photographs on tables in this hall.

In 2025, another epoch-making news for Japanese society was that two Japanese scientists won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry and Physiology or Medicine, respectively. In the last decade, more than ten Japanese Nobel Laureates have been bestowed the world's most prestigious awards in various categories, including Physics, Literature, and Peace, not only Chemistry and Physiology or Medicine. However, there is one category missing: the Nobel Prize in Economics. Some suggest that Japanese people are not particularly adept at making money, like me. That's why it is so important to foster close cooperation with Trinidad and Tobago.

For example, Caribbean Gas Chemical Limited (CGCL), a company established by a Japanese company, Mitsubishi Corporation, is one of the largest methanol producers in Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago has been the world's top or second-largest methanol export country for many years. This is a good example of how close cooperation and collaboration between us have yielded significant results, even though Japanese people may not excel in certain areas.

Finally, it is undoubtedly a fruitful year for us in 2025 to 2026, and there are enormous possibilities that our synergy could make the greatest contributions to global prosperity.

Thank you very much.