

Jamaica independence day

Jamaica at 50: A nation on a mission

Claudia Cecile Barnes
AMBASSADOR OF JAMAICA

Today, Jamaica celebrates 50 years of independence. I am especially privileged to share with the people of Japan my thoughts on our journey toward nationhood and highlight some of our achievements since 1962.



A significant aspect of any nation's journey is the people that we encounter and when we reflect those with whom we have formed partnerships. Since 1964, Jamaica's bilateral partnership established with Japan at the economic, technical and cultural levels has been strong and enduring.

On behalf of the government and people of Jamaica, I am honored to convey greetings on this auspicious occasion to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to express our appreciation to the government and people of Japan.

To my fellow Jamaican nationals residing in Japan, I extend my warmest greetings on this our 50th independence anniversary. Let us join in celebrating this milestone and in renewing our pledges of loyalty and dedication to our beloved homeland, Jamaica.

On Aug. 6, 1962, the dream of our forefathers for an independent and self-reliant nation became a reality. Jamaica embarked on this new phase of self-determination after being a British

colony since 1655. The British bequeathed to us strong institutions, particularly our administrative and educational structures, and an enduring place as a member of the British Commonwealth.

At the start of this journey, we were hopeful, confident and filled with pride. The moment beckoned us into introspection and action: How could we create a truly strong and independent country, with a flourishing economy and a societal framework that would ensure equal rights and justice for all Jamaicans?

The foundations

Our country evolved from being a Spanish colony between the years 1492 to 1655 to being a British colony between 1655 and 1962. When the Spanish explorers landed in Jamaica, they found indigenous inhabitants, the Taino Indians, who called the island Xamayca, meaning "land of wood and water." Under the Spanish, African slaves were imported to provide the labor force needed on the sugar and tobacco plantations. When the British arrived in 1655, the importation of slaves from West Africa continued. After slavery ended in 1838, indentured laborers from China and India were brought to Jamaica to supplement the labor force on the sugar plantations.

Jamaica, therefore, is home to peoples whose ancestors came from Africa, Asia and Europe. We are truly a people whose culture and destiny have been influenced by the confluence of forces from three continents. We have created from these influences our own



Jamaican Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller

unique Jamaican culture, which is rich, dynamic and vibrant.

We have stood proudly in the column of democratic countries for the past 68 years. In 1944, our people gained the right to vote irrespective of gender or status. Jamaicans have enjoyed the freedom to choose the leaders of our nation via the ballot box.

Over the past 50 years, we have achieved national unity and racial harmony, guided by our motto: "Out of Many, One People." We have established a very strong democratic system of governance with free and fair elections every five years.

Women enjoy equal status as men do in our society. We have seen major improvements in the life expectancy of both men and women, they enjoy better health, are better educated and more of

our people now own land and their own homes.

As a free and independent people, we have been able to express ourselves — seeing through our own eyes — in the arts, including music, dance, paintings, sculpture and in our literature. Jamaica has given the world the enduring music of reggae. Our Jamaican culture has also produced icons in many fields, the most legendary is the Hon. Robert Nesta Marley, better known as Bob, King of Reggae. This is the true significance of independence — defining and representing our own reality for ourselves.

Blue Mountain coffee

Blue Mountain coffee is world-famous and our country's most important export to Japan. The brand is synonymous with quality and excellence. We are extremely grateful for Japan's investment and sustained interest in the Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee brand through the Association of Japanese Importers of Jamaican Coffee.

Jamaica's coffee sector has been witnessing exciting developments with the recent introduction of some community and estate Blue Mountain coffees, including some organic farms and two Rainforest Alliance certified farms. These developments have positioned Jamaica for the future growth and

improvement of our premium Blue Mountain coffee exports.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the architects of our independence, our leaders, past and present, and especially to friendly countries that have stood the course with Jamaica.

We treasure Japan's continued cooperation and collaboration, which, over the years, have been reflected through high-level visits to Jamaica, including that of Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino, and the implementation of projects and programs through the Japan International Cooperation Agency that have impacted the lives of many Jamaicans. This year, we are witnessing a notable increase in the number of Jamaicans assigned to Japan through the JET program.

Jamaica has also had tremendous benefits in the context of regional cooperation between the Caribbean Community (Caricom) and Japan. This cooperation has strengthened since our ministers met in Tokyo in September 2010.

In November 2011, Jamaica welcomed a Japanese delegation within the context of the Japan/Caricom Economic Mission. The delegation comprised public and private sector entities and we remain hopeful that this exploratory mission will provide new avenues for enhanced economic cooperation and investments with Japan.



Official logo of Jamaica's 50th independence anniversary
EMBASSY OF JAMAICA

It is heartening to see that the people of Japan, in the aftermath of major challenges, such as the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, are still reaching out and touching the world.

The vision of the government of Jamaica particularly at this time is to use the occasion of Jamaica's 50th anniversary to encourage serious national introspection. As a resilient and confident people, we are looking to the future with the hope that the celebrations will foster even greater national unity. We endeavor to create legacy projects that will stimulate and strengthen our economy, which has weathered the global financial tide and is showing positive signs of recovery.

We are cognizant that our journey is a work in progress whose continued success is dependent on all Jamaicans.

I extend best wishes to my fellow Jamaicans in Japan and we say, "Long live the friendship between Jamaica and Japan."

Jamaica, land we love.

Jamaica continues to leave an indelible mark on world stage



National pride: Heading into the London Olympics, Usain Bolt holds the world and Olympic records in the 100- and 200-meter races. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA

Takeo Hiranuma
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-JAMAICA
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

I would like to extend to the government and people of Jamaica my sincere congratulations on the 50th anniversary of independence. Jamaica has been able to develop through its abundant natural resources and the achievements of its industrious, hardworking people. Jamaica has, over the years, left an indelible mark on the world stage and this has been highlighted by the phenomenal performance of Jamaican athletes, led by Usain Bolt.

I am confident of the continued success and progress of Jamaica and its people.

In Japan, Jamaica is very well known for its Blue Mountain coffee, a brand associated with the



highest quality.

The Japanese people will also remember Jamaica's generous contribution following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. Japan remains profoundly moved and grateful for this act of solidarity.

In closing, I wish to extend best wishes for the continued development and progress of Jamaica, and for the continued unity and prosperity of its people, and for the further strengthening of the ties of friendship between Japan and Jamaica. Again, I express my congratulations to Jamaica on the 50th anniversary of its independence.

Promoting Jamaica in Japan, strengthening bilateral relations

Tatsushi Ueshima
HONORARY CONSUL OF JAMAICA IN KOBE;
CHAIRMAN, ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE
IMPORTERS OF JAMAICAN COFFEE

On behalf of the Association of Japanese Importers of Jamaican Coffee (AJJIC) and as honorary consul of Jamaica in Kobe, I would like to convey to the government and people of Jamaica our best wishes and sincere congratulations on the occasion of Jamaica's 50th independence anniversary.

The relationship between Jamaica and



Japan has been strengthened with the consolidation of Japan as the dominant consumer of the world-renowned Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee. Today people around the world not only love this prestigious coffee, which made its advent into the world market as far back as 1757, but also consider it the platform for the highly successful launch of Jamaican athletics and music since independence. Jamaican athletes have gained international prominence through their amazing ability and the athletic community worldwide has eagerly awaited their performance at the London Olympic Games. This bears testimony to Jamaica's continuous efforts at nation building over the five

decades of its independence and signifies that the country is now fully on the way to becoming a culturally preeminent nation.

We are certain that Jamaica will achieve even greater development and positive social and economic transformation under the able leadership of Jamaican Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Lucretia Simpson Miller. We at the AJJIC would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to support Jamaica's coffee industry and the promotion of its imports into Japan, while further strengthening the ties between our nations.

I wish all Jamaican citizens a happy Independence Day.

Congratulations
to the Government and
People of Jamaica
on the 50th Anniversary
of Their Independence

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Tatsushi Ueshima

Honorary Consul of Jamaica in Kobe
and

UCC Holdings Co., Ltd.
Group Representative

Representative Director-Chairman