

Jamaica independence day

Future seen as key transport hub, tourist destination

Ricardo Allicock
AMBASSADOR OF JAMAICA

On the 52nd anniversary of Jamaica's independence, it is my esteemed privilege to extend warm greetings, on behalf of the government and people of Jamaica, to Their Imperial Majesties, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the government and people of Japan.



In honor of this auspicious occasion and the commemoration, in March 2014, of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Jamaica and Japan, the Embassy of Jamaica will be hosting, in collaboration with the management of the Hotel Okura Tokyo, a Jamaica Cuisine Week at that iconic hotel during the week of Sept. 8 to 15. We encourage all to partake in the authentic interpretations of Jamaican fare that will be available during the event. The menu will feature creations by Executive chef Martin Maginley of the Round Hill Hotel and Spa in beautiful Montego Bay, Jamaica.

This year is one of many important milestones in Jamaica's history, not least of which is the 70th anniversary of the attainment of universal adult suffrage by the people of Jamaica. This anniversary serves to underscore the importance of our journey to independence, as Jamaica has remained among the most stable and vibrant democracies in the Western Hemisphere. Given the history of almost five centuries of institutional inequity, the right to vote signaled an important milestone and is, indeed, the cornerstone upon which Jamaican society continues to engage and develop.

While this journey has strengthened the sense of nationhood among the people of Jamaica, the country has, by virtue of its necessary interaction within the global community, as well as its geo-political status as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), been vulnerable to external economic and climactic shocks. Consequently, Jamaica is still in the process of recovering from the

global financial crisis of 2008 and is currently battling with a debilitating drought that has affected the outlook for agricultural exports.

Despite these challenges, Jamaica experienced moderate growth of 0.2 percent in 2013 following negative growth of 0.5 percent the previous year. This has lent credence to the current administration's stated commitment to driving growth while reducing debt under an International Monetary Fund Agreement, which, in its current iteration, has provided an extended fund facility of \$958 million. Essentially, broad steps are being taken to reform and enhance trust in the economy.

Complementarily, our Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller, has established the Partnership for Jamaica, which lays out a program for economic stabilization, growth with equity and sustainable development through social partnership. There is also convergence occurring through the laying of this foundation for improved domestic business cooperation in conjunction with Jamaica preparing to establish itself as a major logistics hub for the purpose of better serving the anticipated "Panamax" expansion of the Panama Canal.

Jamaica's geographical position at the center of north-south and east-west shipping lanes in the Americas makes it the ideal choice as a logistics hub for the Western Hemisphere, providing access to a market of 800 million and with the added potential of being a gateway to Europe and Africa. Kingston Harbor, which is the seventh largest natural harbor in the world, will become an important part of the global logistics chain and is already preparing to receive 12,500 TEU ships. Jamaica is therefore not only on track to become the transshipment and air cargo logistics hub for the Western Hemisphere, but also the Caribbean's strategic hub for handling bulk commodities and the Latin American and Caribbean center for aviation related maintenance, repair and overhaul, as well as ship repair and dry-docking.

While Jamaica moves forward with these plans, it has



Jamaican Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller

been experiencing encouraging year-on-year increases in tourist arrivals. Last year marked the first in which Jamaica saw more than 2 million stopover visitors and more than 1 million cruise ship visitors. It has also seen increases in airlift and cruise ship capacity to the island and the estab-

lishment of additional airline and cruise ship services to Jamaica. In this regard, through meetings held with major tour operators in Tokyo earlier this year, renewed efforts are underway by our Japanese travel partners to highlight Jamaica as a travel destination for Japanese travelers. In this regard, the Embassy of Jamaica invites all interested persons to visit the Jamaica booth at the JATA Tourism EXPO Japan in September, 2014 at Tokyo Big Sight.

Fortunately, for those who are unable to immediately travel to Jamaica, the essence of Jamaican culture — music, dance and cuisine — is on offer through local events such as the One Love Jamaica Festival. This annual event, which takes place in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park, was most recently held on June 21 and 22, and featured renowned Jamaican performing artists such as singer Eric Donaldson and the L'ACADCO Dance Company. In recognition of this significant year, the One Love Jamaica Festival will also be held in Nagano (Aug. 16 to 17), Nagoya (Sept. 20 to 21) and Okinawa (Nov. 22 to 23).

Additionally, the inaugural Japan-Jamaica Festival will be held on Sept. 14 in Tokyo. All of the aforementioned activities help to cement the idea, indeed, the reality of steadily strengthening the increasingly warm ties that bind Jamaica and Japan closely together.

This spirit of friendship and cooperation was a strong feature of the official visit of the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller to Japan last November, during which an agreement on technical cooperation between Jamaica and Japan was signed.

These strong ties were also evident at the more recent bilateral talks between Prime Minister Simpson Miller and Prime Minister Abe during his visit to the region to attend the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)/Japan Summit, one of the highlights of the celebration of the Japan/CARICOM Friendship Year 2014. Out of these discussions, we anticipate further enhancement of mutually beneficial areas of cooperation and partnership.

In years past, Bob Marley was the singular Jamaican name which enjoyed univer-

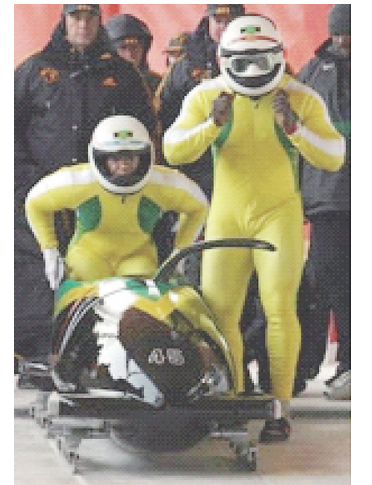


Coffee grown in the Blue Mountains in Jamaica is considered to be one of the finest and most sought-after varieties in the world. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA

sal recognition, but recently, the name of Jamaica's most prominent and winningest athlete has joined that rare pantheon of fame — the Honorable Usain Bolt. His successes and exploits have helped to maintain the rapt attention of the people of Japan and the world have devoted to not only Bolt, but also to Jamaica's numerous other world-class athletes such as our inspiring bobsled team, which competed in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. It is my hope that the excitement of the performances and persona of Jamaica's athletes

such as Bolt, in tandem with the attractions of reggae music, beautiful mountains and beaches, scintillating cuisine and the genuine warmth of the Jamaican people will attract more visitors from Japan over the years to come.

I take this opportunity to thank Takeo Hiranuma, chairman of the Japan-Jamaica Parliamentary Friendship League, and Tatsushi Ueshima, honorary consul of Jamaica in Kobe, for the unwavering friendship extended to Jamaica during the past year. As well, I thank the Association of Japanese Importers of Ja-



The Jamaican bobsled team EMBASSY OF JAMAICA

maican Coffee, Marubeni Corp., Hotel Okura Tokyo, the One Love Jamaica Festival Organizing Committee, the Jamaica Tourist Board-Japan, Campari Japan Ltd., Asahi Breweries, Ltd. and Nippon Beer Co., distributors of Appleton Rum and Red Stripe Beer, respectively, for their considerable support in the promotion of Jamaica and its products over the past year.

Finally, on this, the 52nd anniversary of Jamaica's independence, I sincerely thank The Japan Times for the opportunity to celebrate this national milestone with all its readers.

**Congratulations
to the Government and
People of Jamaica
on the 52nd Anniversary
of Their Independence**

**Association of Japanese Importers
of Jamaican Coffee**

Ataka Trading Co., Ltd.
Kanematsu Corporation
MC FOODS LIMITED
UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd.
Wataru & Co., Ltd.
Yutaka Trading Co., Ltd.

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Marubeni

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<http://www.marubeni.com>

**Congratulations
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of Their Independence**

Tatsushi Ueshima

Honorary Consul of Jamaica in Kobe
and
UCC Holdings Co., Ltd.
Group Representative
Representative Director-Chairman