

Marshall Islands national day

Strong ties, mutual experiences mark friendly relationship

Tom D. Kijiner
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

On the occasion of the 35th National Day of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, it is with great pleasure and pride that I extend, on behalf of H.E. President Christopher J. Loeak, the government and people of the RMI, a warm greeting of lakwe and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the government and people of



Japan.

It has been one year since I first took up the post of ambassador to Japan. Over that time, although it is a very short period to accomplish much, I am proud to have witnessed and been a part of the undertakings and exchanges between my country and Japan that have forged yet an even closer relationship.

In commemoration of 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan, Loeak and his wife made an official visit to Japan at the invitation of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe this past December. During the visit, Loeak and his wife had the distinguished honor and privilege of a royal

audience with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko followed by talks with Abe to discuss issues of mutual interest to the two countries.

On both occasions, Loeak told both the Imperial Couple and Abe that although diplomatic relations were formally established only 25 years ago, our countries' relationship dates back further to 1914 when Japan took over the administration of our islands, which resulted in a good number of Marshallese-Japanese descendants today.

Further strengthening our bond, when a strong typhoon hit our capital city in 1918, Emperor Taisho graciously provided relief funds to assist the

Marshallese affected by the typhoon. After the typhoon, the Japanese government (Imperial) aid fund also contributed to replanting coconut plantations on Majuro Atoll. A monument to the imperial graciousness was erected on November 14, 1919, to commemorate the Imperial favors for future generations.

Since the first encounter between the people of the RMI and Japan, we have continued to enjoy close and vibrant relations through historical ties and have maintained a close bond of friendship. The RMI and Japan share a similar nuclear legacy, especially the people of Bikini Atoll, Enewetak Atoll, Rongelap Atoll and Utrik Atoll

with the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Our islands were used as nuclear test sites for the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, and more than a half a century later, our people are still haunted by the fateful events.

We have and will continue to participate in the Nagasaki and Hiroshima peace and memorial ceremonies to demonstrate that we stand together with the people of Japan and understand fully the magnitude of the painful events of the 0.bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki many decades ago. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the nuclear testing in my country and, as a nation who shares a similar fate with

Japan, Loeak's recent wreath laying at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial clearly signifies our solidarity with the victims and families of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the nuclear incident in Fukushima, and reinforces our support and efforts toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Japan will always be considered a true friend and development partner of the RMI. The development assistance provided by Japan over the years in the areas of natural disaster response; environment and climate change; sustainable development; and human security such as health and education, have contributed

tremendously to our growth and progress.

Japan's recent contribution to the 44th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting we hosted, its high level of representatives at the Forum as well as the 60th anniversary of the U.S. nuclear tests in the RMI, and most importantly, its recent commitment to the Majuro Declaration on Climate Leadership all signify the value that Japan puts into this relationship. In reciprocity, my government

will continue to support Japan's endeavors in the international arena, most especially in its aspiration to become a permanent

member of the U.N. Security Council.

In closing, I wish to convey my sincerest gratitude and renew my personal commitment to working closely with the government of Japan in furthering the cordial relations between our countries for the mutual benefit of both our people as we embark on 25 years of friendship and cooperation. I hope that the establishment of sister cities between the Marshall Islands local councils and Japan's local governments will further strengthen this bond. May the good Lord continue to bless the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Japan!

Developed countries have obligation to preserve Pacific islands

Kazunori Tanaka
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MARSHALL
ISLANDS PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE

The Pacific Ocean Islands Forum "Expert Panel on Climate Leadership" was held in Majuro, the capital of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in September.

I would like to note that the Republic of the Marshall Is-

lands played a big role as the host country in the forum attended by the leaders of 16 O c e a n i a countries.

As the then senior vice environment minister, I represented Japan at the



forum on my second visit to the country.

The history between the two nations is very deep, with Japan having been commissioned to govern the Marshall Islands for about 30 years until the beginning of World War II, and many Japanese emigrated there to make the islands their second home.

The Environment Ministry

is trying its best to tackle the issue of climate change, which is putting Pacific islands in danger.

I enjoyed wading in the Marshall blue sea, which boasts a beautiful azure color and clarity, during my stay in your country. It is the responsibility of developed countries to conserve beautiful Pacific islands.

Congratulations
and Best Wishes to the Government
and People of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
on the 35th Anniversary of Their Constitution

Kazunori Tanaka
President, Japan-Marshall Islands Parliamentary Friendship League
Former Senior Vice-Minister of Environment
Member of the House of Representatives

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We sincerely appreciate your good relationship
over the last 110 years and hope for the same in the future.

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