

Panama independence day

In times of difficulty, Panama supports the future of Japan

Jorge Kosmas Sifaki
AMBASSADOR OF PANAMA

On behalf of the government of the Republic of Panama, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all Panamanian citizens in Japan on the occasion of the 108th anniversary of our independence. I would also like to greet Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko as well as the noble Japanese people.

I take this opportunity to again express our sincere condolences for the victims of the



Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on March 11. Immediately after this day, the government of Panama issued an executive order to provide urgent assistance to the government and affected people of Japan. In addition, H.E. President Ricardo Martinelli of Panama personally attended to the Embassy of Japan in Panama to express our solidarity and offer assistance in the aftermath of the tragic events that had occurred.

Moreover, a month after the tragic event, our government organized a mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Panama City in memory of all victims of the earthquake and tsunami, meanwhile, in Japan from May

2 to 4, diplomatic and local staff of the Embassy of Panama participated in cleanup and debris removal work in the city of Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture. On May 5, Children's Day in Japan, personnel of the embassy visited the evacuation center at the Watanoha Elementary School in Ishinomaki, where they delivered a donation of sweets and toys to children and served Panamanian coffee to all evacuees.

Furthermore, on June 29, the Embassy of Panama organized a charity Caribbean Night Cruise in Tokyo Bay. The event, addressed to the Diplomatic Corps accredited in Tokyo, was aimed at collecting donations for the orphans of Soma, Fukushima Prefecture, who had lost their parents during the earthquake and tsunami. The donations collected during the event were transferred to The Soma City Earthquake Disaster Orphan Scholarship Fund, which was established by the city to cover education and living expenses of orphan children until they become of age, which is age 20 in Japan.

On July 31, the Embassy of Panama, together with other embassies of the Latin American and the Caribbean Group (GRU-LAC), organized a Latin music concert in the evacuation center at Big Palette in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture. The purpose of the event was to express GRU-LAC's solidarity and encourage evacuees from



Solidarity: Panama President Ricardo Martinelli visits Japanese Ambassador Ikuo Mizuki on March 11 at the Embassy of Japan in Panama City to offer relief assistance. EMBASSY OF PANAMA

the towns of Tomiokamachi and Kawauchimura who were housed at the Convention Hall of Big Palette due to the ongoing nuclear crisis.

More recently, on Oct. 23, the

Embassy of Panama helped in the organization of the Diplomatic Corps Golf Tournament and Golf Familiarization Trip in Solidarity with Soma. This event was held with the purpose

of supporting The Soma City Earthquake Disaster Orphan Scholarship Fund.

Needless to say, the Republic of Panama keeps a strong commitment to support the quick recovery of Japan as our country has not imposed any restriction on travel nor has stopped any imports from Japan. On another aspect and as a display of our government's support to Japan, Panama participated in the Specialty Coffee Fair of Japan 2011 on Sept. 28 to 30 with an important delegation of coffee producers. In addition, the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Panama carried out a seminar called Panama Invest Tokyo 2011 on Sept. 29 to promote business opportunities for Japanese companies in Panama and the larger Latin American region. The seminar was attended by more than 200 companies, representing the most important economic sectors of Japan. It is important to mention that Tokyo was the only city in Asia hosting this event.

Also, on Sept. 30, the Republic of Panama served as the chair of the International Ladies Benevolent Society (ILBS) Benefit Evening, in the person of my wife. This has been a major fundraising event held by ILBS since 1953, supported by members of the Imperial Family, diplomatic corps and leaders of important corporations. This year's benefit event proceeds have been assigned for various

welfare projects in the Tohoku area.

To conclude the year of activities in Japan, in early December the Panama Maritime Authority will hold seminars in Imabari, Ehime Prefecture, and Tokyo to provide updated information to Japanese shipowners on Panama's maritime industry and regulations. It is important to men-

tion that Panama is the largest open registry in the world with more than 9,000 vessels, with Japan being the No. 1 user of the Panama registry.

There is no doubt that the number of activities organized by our country in Japan in this challenging year sends a strong message that Panama continues to support the future of Japan.

**Congratulations
on the 108th Anniversary of
the Independence of
the Republic of Panama**

 **Mitsubishi Corporation**



Global business: Panama Invest Tokyo 2011 on Sept. 29 is attended by more than 200 Japanese companies. EMBASSY OF PANAMA